

CHINA MAGNIFICENT

FIVE THOUSAND YEARS OF CHINESE ART

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by DAGNY CARTER

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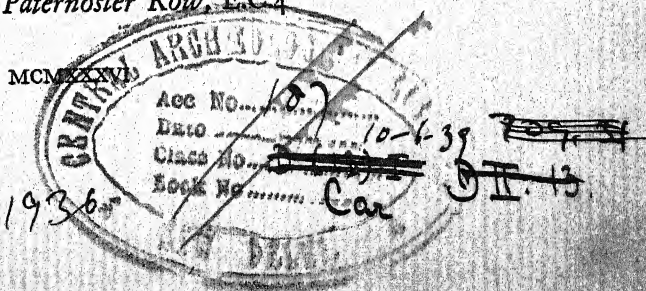
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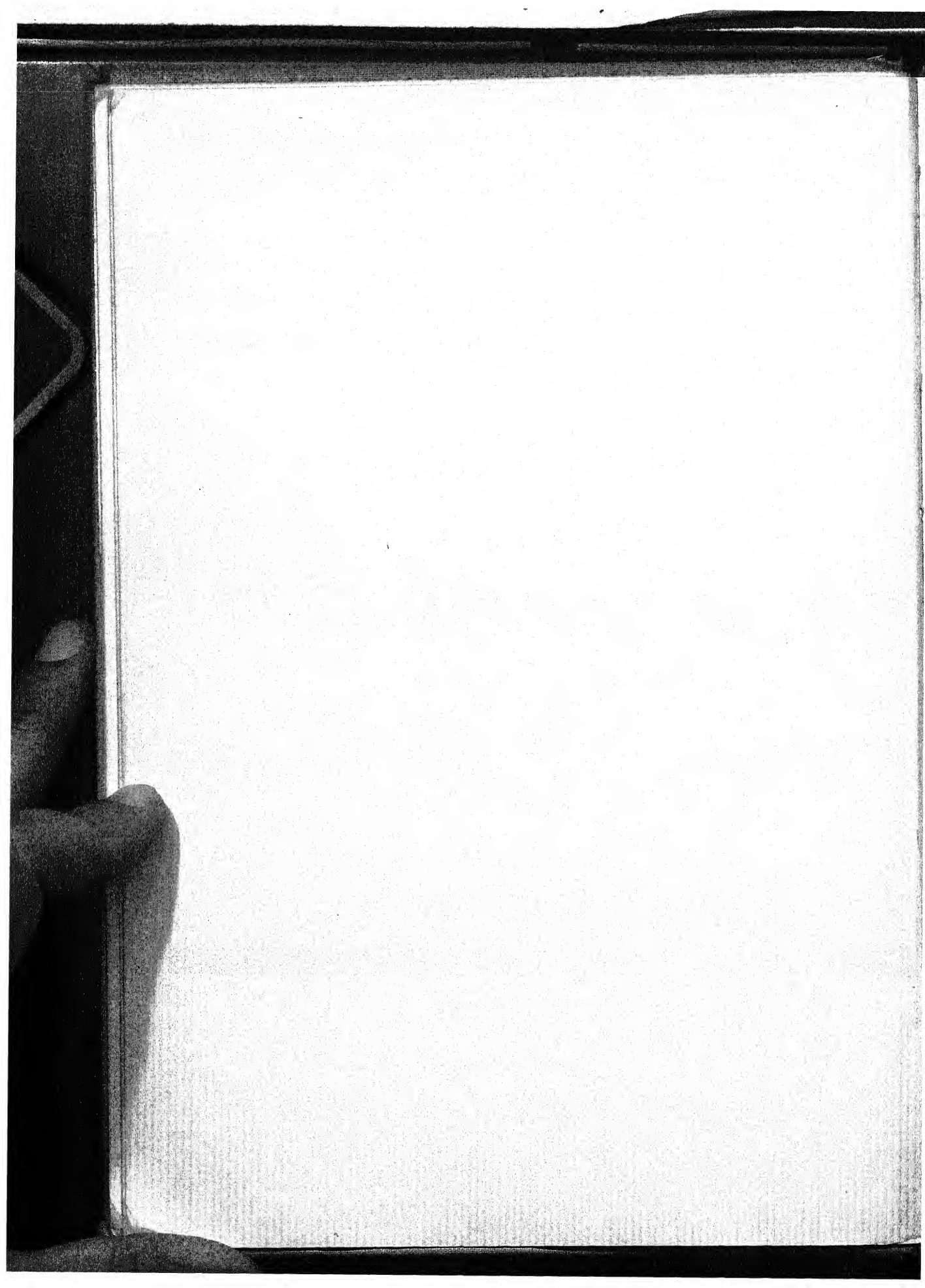
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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

ix

PART ONE

THE AGE OF MAGIC AND RITUAL
Approximately 3000 B.C.-100 A.D.

I STONE-AGE GRAVES AND PREHISTORIC SITES

3

II FEUDAL CHINA

II

Archaic jades and ritual bronzes

III NOMAD INVASIONS

27

The Animal Style Art of Eurasia

IV THE EMPIRE BUILDER

41

Ch'in and Han bronzes, Ch'u bronze objects and early mirrors

V IMPERIAL EXPANSION

49

The silk trade, bronze buckles, early architecture

VI THE GRAVES OF THE SONS OF HAN

59

Grave figures and potteries, early sculpture, stamped and painted grave tiles

PART TWO

THE AGE OF FAITH AND SPLENDOR
Approximately 100-1200 A.D.

VII THE COMING OF BUDDHISM

75

Buddhist art of Ghandara and Turkestan, Turfan and Tunhuang excavations

VIII THE DARK AGES

83

Indigenous painting

vii

CONTENTS

IX CAVE TEMPLES	95
<i>The Northern Wei Dynasty, Buddhist sculpture</i>	
X THE GLORY THAT WAS T'ANG	109
<i>Restoration of the empire, imperial expansion</i>	
XI THE ART OF THE T'ANG ERA	117
<i>Metal work and potteries, printing and painting</i>	
XII ARTISTIC FULFILMENT	135
<i>Sung Dynasty painting and ceramics</i>	

PART THREE

THE AGE OF ARTISANS AND TRADERS

Approximately 1200-1910 A.D.

XIII CONQUERED CHINA	155
<i>Causes for political disintegration, religious crystallization and artistic stagnation. Chinese art under the Mongols</i>	
XIV MING NATIONALISM	165
<i>Architecture and painting</i>	
XV THE EUROPEAN EXPANSION AND CHINA	181
<i>The porcelain trade. Chinese influences in the industrial art of Europe</i>	
XVI THE MANCHUS	191
<i>Painting, porcelains, lacquer, decorative art and architecture</i>	
BIBLIOGRAPHY	209
INDEX	217

INTRODUCTION

THE aim of this survey of China's artistic development is not so much to give a detailed account of the various branches of Chinese art, which has been done more fully in larger works written by specialists in their respective fields, but rather to show the gradual development, organic cohesion and intimate relationship between Chinese art and thought. For in no country has the soul of its people been more strikingly expressed in its art than in China. Every cultural, political and religious movement from without and within became sooner or later apparent in China's artistic expression.

The downfall of the Manchu Dynasty in 1911 ended the third epoch in China's artistic development, and the present volume is brought to a close with this dramatic event. In doing this I would not, however, for a moment imply that China's artistic development has come to an end. During my visit to China in 1931-32 I made a study of present day trends in Chinese art and became satisfied that so far from being dead it is more like a newborn babe. The forces of new life both from within and without are, however, at the present so momentous that it would be a thankless task indeed to try to predict how the art of China during the next epoch is likely to develop. But whatever the trend, there can be no doubt that there is inherent in Chinese art today every possibility for future development.

Raphael Petrucci, who died a victim of the Great War in 1917, ends his excellent little book, *Chinese Painters*, with the following significant words: "For the Far East as for Europe the problem now presented is that of a revival. Bent beneath the weight of the prestige of the past, too learned in the last word of culture, modern art is trying to find itself, groping blindly, full of promising but unfinished works. The time

INTRODUCTION

has come when there are signs throughout the world of a desire for a universal civilization by the reconstructing of ancient divergencies. Europe and the Far East bring into contrast the most vigorous traditions in history. Henceforward there is interest for both civilizations in studying and in coming to understand a foreign ideal. Thus will arise the elements of a new culture."

Since these pregnant words were written more than fifteen years ago, the world has passed through a period of disillusion and of collapsing ideals unprecedented in its history. The international coöperation, which for a few years after the Great War gave promise of a better understanding among the peoples of the world, has been replaced by a narrow nationalism which is daily building the barriers among the nations higher. Our Western civilization has been weighed and found wanting, and the art of the world—the sensitive child of a hard mechanistic age—is still groping blindly, still trying to express this bewildering time in an art which seems at times as chaotic as the source of its inspiration.

But in the midst of this storm and stress, in the birthpangs of a new world order to be born, there is heard a still small voice heralding the dawn of a new day. Across the walls of self-sufficiency, which our Western civilization has built around its boundaries, there is penetrating a light from the East, a pathfinder to another part of our world, where for centuries untold men have tried—even as in our part of the world men have tried—to read meaning into life and to express in its art the life of the spirit. No greater spiritual advance has come in our day than the growing awareness of the ends of the earth and in the increasing belief that internationalism to withstand human frailties must begin by sharing the spiritual inheritance, not only of the West, but of the entire human race. In the dawning consciousness of a universal realm of the spirit, where there are no national boundaries, there is promise and hope that Chinese art shall bring to the West the message which it brought its own people—the message of a beauty which depends, not only on that which mortal eyes can see, but also on that greater and eternal vision which has its hidden source in the spirit of man.

A popular summary covering as extensive a field as the present volume

INTRODUCTION

becomes of a necessity indebted to the works of scholars in the various branches of Chinese art. Not to burden the text with footnotes, I have tried, as far as possible, to incorporate in the text or in the bibliography my sources of information. It is impossible to mention here by name the many scholars and collectors who through their books or through personal contacts have been an inspiration and help during my years of study and in the preparation of this book. There is a singularly close bond among the men and women interested in China's antiquities, an affinity which transcends geographical boundaries and diverse tongues.

I wish, however, to express particularly my indebtedness to Dr. Karlgren's *Chinese History*, the fifteenth volume of a comprehensive world history in Swedish which has not been translated. In constructing the historical framework for the present volume I have found in this excellent short history an inestimable aid. To Dr. Karlgren himself, who on several occasions has given me the benefit of his great scholarship in a critical analysis of difficult questions, I am also very grateful.

My first interest in China's history and art came to me during the years when I was privileged to follow my husband in his research. The dedication of this book to his memory cannot begin to express my gratitude for the inspiration which his presence in my life has ever been.

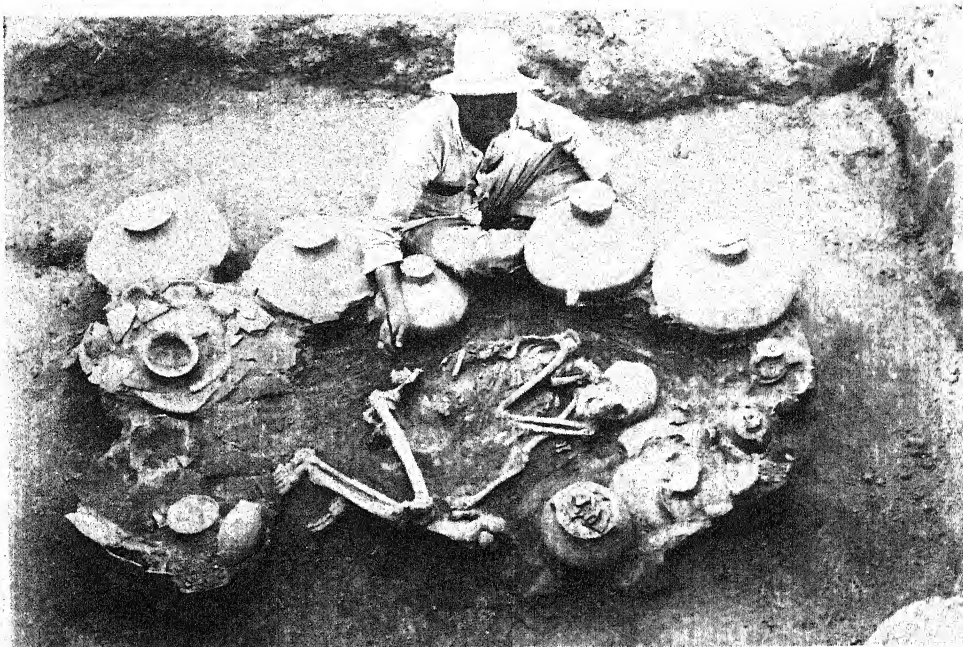
After his death it was my good fortune to meet Dr. J. G. Andersson, head of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities in Stockholm, whose epoch-making excavations in China have made this museum a world center in pre-historic Chinese research. Dr. Andersson encouraged me to take my interests in the Chinese field more seriously and finally suggested to me the specialized study which I have been making in the Eurasian Animal Style Art. At intervals I have been privileged to do some of this work under Dr. Andersson's inspiring guidance in the Stockholm museum, a privilege for which I shall ever be deeply grateful.

Peiping, June 1934.

PART ONE

THE AGE OF MAGIC AND RITUAL

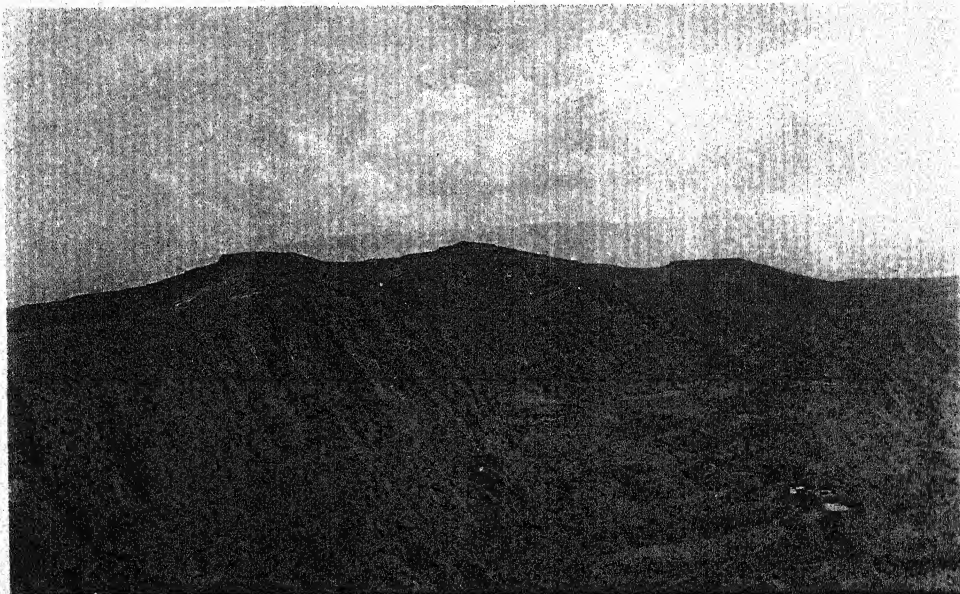
GRAVES AND ALTARS



STONE-AGE GRAVE IN KANSU (*Approximately 3000 B.C.*)

Excavated by Dr. J. G. Andersson in 1924

PHOTO: COURTESY DR. J. G. ANDERSSON



KANSU, NING TING HSIEN

The Pan Shan Grave Fields from Where Came the Big Mortuary Urns

PHOTO: COURTESY DR. J. G. ANDERSSON

I

STONE-AGE GRAVES AND PREHISTORIC SITES

WHILE most countries in the West for the last hundred years have been adding new knowledge to their written historical records from archæological finds, it is not until the last two decades that this has been done to any extent in China. A few scattered implements from China's stone-age had been found here and there, but not enough on which to build a theory as to the origin of the Chinese people. There were, and still are, scholars who claim that these implements belonged to aboriginal tribes and that the Chinese people had come to China from the West with a well-developed civilization.

Up to 1919 no archæological finds had been made which could refute this theory, but at that time the Swedish scientist, J. G. Andersson, acting as mining adviser to the Chinese government, made some epoch-making stone-age excavations, which established, beyond a doubt, that the Chinese of today are the descendants of the people who lived in China five thousand years ago and probably much earlier.

The graves and dwelling sites from China's stone-age excavated in Honan, Manchuria and Kansu disclosed a fully developed agricultural community, in many respects strikingly related to present-day China, with settled habits and domesticated animals. Some of the implements found in these places show clearly their relationship to objects sold on the streets of China now. The woman who spins her thread in the doorway today uses almost the same kind of whorl as her ancestor used five thousand years ago, and knives and axes made of iron today have changed but little in type from the stone knives and axes of five thousand years ago.

As in all early agricultural communities pottery forms a large part of the excavated material. Primitive man depended on the soil for almost everything, and the yellow loess soil of North China made a beautiful

STONE-AGE GRAVES AND PREHISTORIC SITES

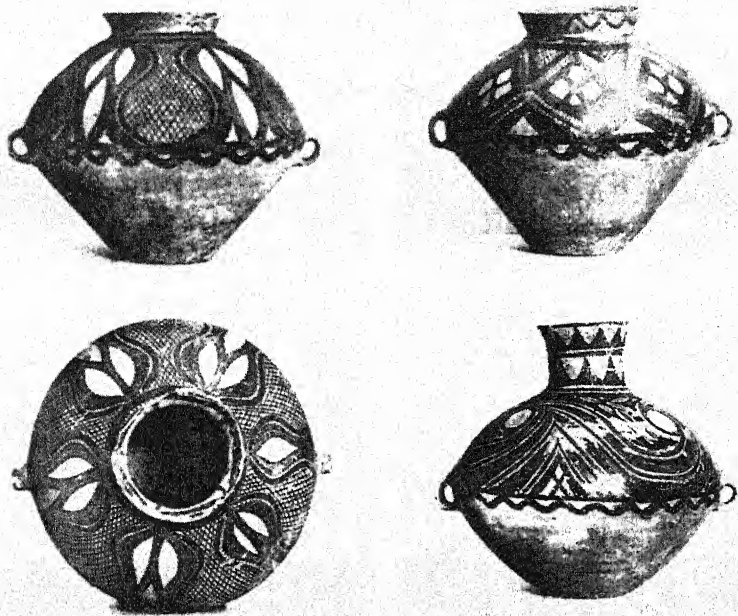
ware. The thin, smooth, delicate pottery of these excavations shows a highly developed technique. The decorations are nearly all spiral and geometric designs and the colorings are the black, red and white on a greyish or buff colored clay found on primitive ceramics in other parts of the world.

The first excavations at Yangshao in the province of Honan brought to light a whole neolithic village. Quantities of household implements made of stone and bone were found, but practically all the pottery found here was broken fragments. Several vessels have, however, been restored and show a ware superior in quality and coloring to anything found elsewhere in China. The clay surface of these Honan vessels is as smooth as silk and the colors, especially the red, have a depth not found on potteries from other localities.

On a later expedition to Kansu on the desert border, Andersson discovered a hillside graveyard from China's stone-age in which were found many unbroken vessels, all more or less of the same type as the vessels found in Honan. Twelve of these jars were found in one grave around the corpse. Four were made of undecorated grey clay, but the eight ornamented jars represented as many different designs with one exception—they all had a highly characteristic red line with black indentations on both sides, worked into the pattern. As this particular design was found on all the grave urns but was hardly ever found on the ceramics from the dwelling sites, Andersson named it "the death pattern."

A Swedish archæologist, Hannah Rydh, has brought together a great deal of material showing that this particular line was also used on late stone-age potteries in Europe. Commenting on Rydh's conclusions, Andersson says, "If further research can prove that this design was used on the funerary jars of all of Eurasia at the end of the stone-age, we may be forced to assume that it was prompted by religious ideas held in common by geographically widely separated peoples."

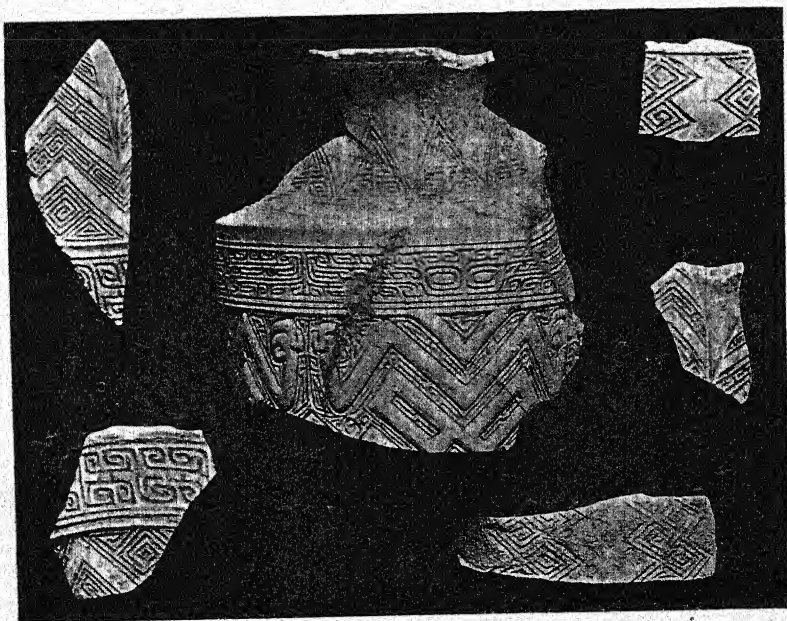
Among primitive peoples red symbolized life. In China, to this day, red is used in everything connected with weddings and birth, while white is used for mourning. The red center in the death pattern may then symbolize the blood, man's life-giving substance, as does the red ochre so



STONE AGE POTTERIES. *Yangshao Period (Approximately 3000 B.C.)*

Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm

PHOTOS: SIRÈN, HISTORY OF EARLY CHINESE ART



FRAGMENTS OF WHITE CERAMIC FROM ANYANG

Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm

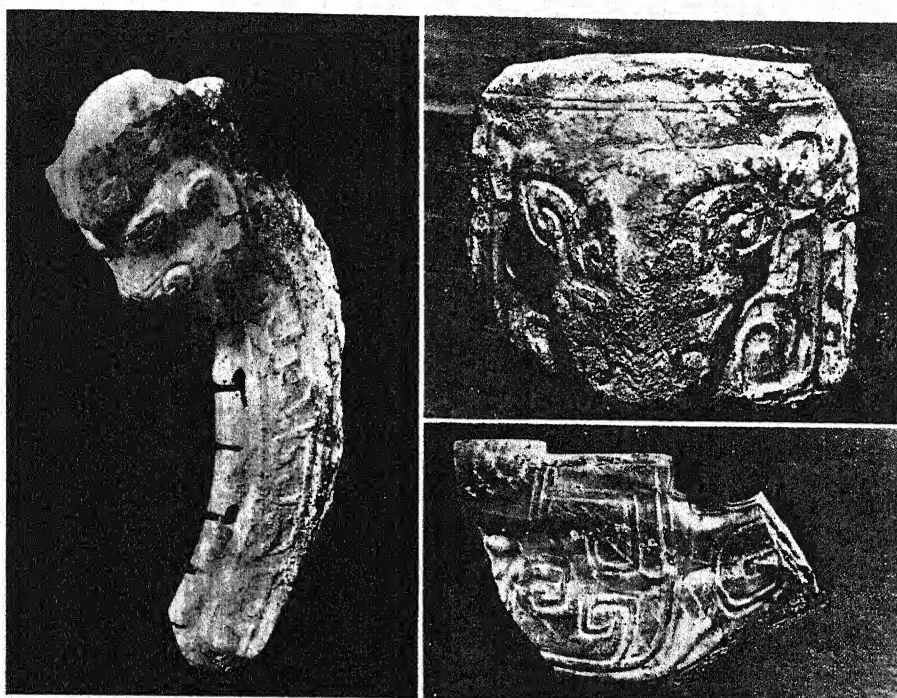
PHOTO: SIRÈN, HISTORY OF EARLY CHINESE ART

STONE-AGE GRAVES AND PREHISTORIC SITES

often found in primitive graves. Rydh brings out that the black indentations on either side of the red center are really a series of triangles, and the triangle among early peoples symbolized female fecundity. As the cowrie shell, which originally signified the same function, has also been pictured on some of the jars, we may find that we have in these old designs an expression of man's never-ending "Life Quest." As these primitive peoples put their dead in the grave they surrounded them with an art which expressed what Andersson has poetically called "a resurrection symphony" in form and color. While further research will bring new light in this field, as yet barely touched upon, of this much we may be certain now, that these vessels were not made for art's or utility's sake only, but that we have expressed in this primitive art the eternal hopes and fears of the human soul as it faced life's mystery, its beginning and end, a mystery as deep today as then.

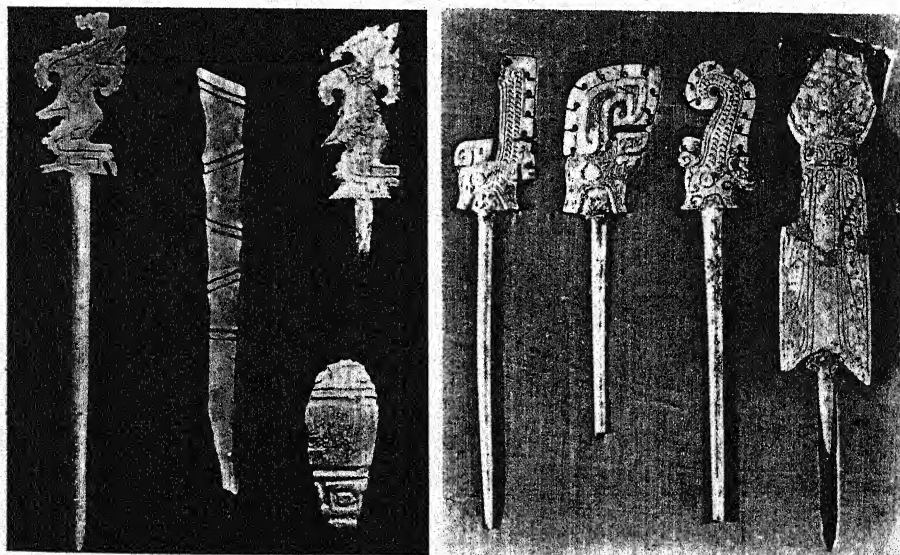
The stone-age potteries, found in Honan, Kansu and Manchuria, have been divided chronologically into six periods. The most perfect specimens belong to the second period which is called Yangshao. This is no longer a geographical term, but signifies a type found in various parts of China which is chronologically placed about 3000 B.C. The third and fourth periods showed variations in type but continued to produce beautiful ware, though not up to the perfection of the second period. The last two periods are now thought to be quite late, some even as late as the first millennium B.C. As the making of bronze vessels was known long before these later vessels were made they are not stone-age vessels, although there can be no doubt that they are the direct descendants of a neolithic culture. The deterioration of these vessels of the later periods can be explained possibly by the fact that bronze vessels were being used for ceremonial and funerary purposes, while the pottery of these periods was merely household utensils.

Excavations during the last few decades have established the fact that there was over a large part of the old world during the third and fourth millennium B.C. a sedentary agricultural population, which made more or less the same type of potteries, and which seems to have been familiar with the use of the potter's wheel in contrast to other communities of



ANYANG SCULPTURE. MARBLE (*Approximately 1200 B.C.*)

PHOTOS: COURTESY DR. J. G. ANDERSSON



HAIR ORNAMENTS. CARVED BONE FROM ANYANG (*Approximately 1200 B.C.*)

Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm

PHOTOS: SIRÈN, HISTORY OF EARLY CHINESE ART

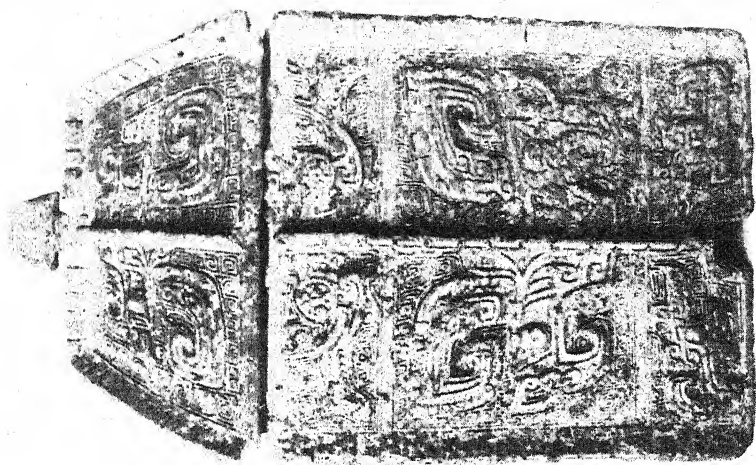
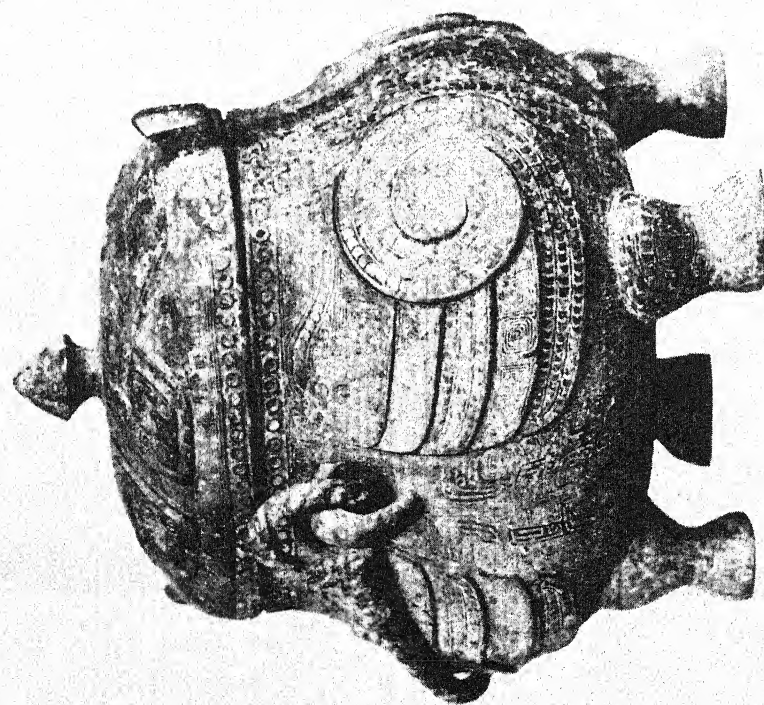
STONE-AGE GRAVES AND PREHISTORIC SITES

less settled habits where it was evidently unknown. One finds also over this area, to a certain extent, the same customs used in the burial of the dead. Suggestions of a possible intercourse of influences, ideas and cults in prehistoric times have by these excavations been given new significance. The Chinese ceramics show especially striking points of similarity to potteries found in Mesopotamia and in Russia in the Anau and Tripolje cultures.

Until these stone-age excavations revealed an earlier culture, Chinese history, before 1000 B.C., had been hidden in the hazy mist of legends and folklore handed down from father to son. From the beginning of this century inscribed oracle bones from the region around Anyang, the site of the Yin Dynasty capital in Honan, from the first centuries of the second millennium B.C., have come to the knowledge of Chinese and Western scholars. These oracle bones constitute the earliest known Chinese writing. The characters are archaic and differ from the perfect system of writing from the first century of the Christian era, which has come down almost unchanged to the present time. The inscriptions were largely used in divination, but they corroborate also, to a certain extent, the oral traditions of approximate dates and names of emperors of this period. Quantities of the bones and shells are still unread and future research may give even greater significance to these early writings.

There is a long gap in the history of Chinese art to be filled in between the early stone-age potteries and the excavations at Anyang and at several other sites in Honan, Shensi and Shantung. The most exceptional object excavated at Anyang from this period is a human torso of marble. The figure is seated in a crouched position with the arms around the knees. The arms and thighs are tattooed with a design strikingly like the designs on later bronzes.

Bronze making started in China most probably before the fourteenth century B.C., but no specimens from this early period can be dated with any degree of certainty, although there are many references to early bronzes in later historical records. Several smaller pieces of bronze and of conventionalized animal sculpture in marble, some fragments of hair ornaments of carved bone and fragments of a beautiful ivory-colored



CEREMONIAL BRONZE VESSEL. Shang-Yin Dynasty
1766-1122 B.C. from Anyang. In a Chinese Collection. Peiping

STONE-AGE GRAVES AND PREHISTORIC SITES

carved ceramic, decorated with the same type of design as on later bronzes, are also said to come from this locality.

While the continuation of some of the shapes of the stone-age vessels in later bronzes suggest a gradual evolution, the designs on the Anyang sculpture and ceramics as well as on the later bronzes do not corroborate this impression. Whether the art of the stone-age people came to an end and a new indigenous art was created, or whether new influences from without came in which gradually changed the earlier designs, are questions we are, as yet, unable to answer.

The Anyang designs show a fully developed art. It is evident that conventionalization of naturalistic motives had already at this time a long history behind it. The art traditions which the conquering Chou Dynasty inherited from the defeated Yin and Shang Dynasties reveal a civilization so advanced that one is justified in believing that it must have produced other forms of art of which as yet we know very little. New revelations may come from the excavations, which during the last years have been carried on by an enthusiastic group of young Chinese archaeologists.

A considerable number of bronzes excavated on the site of Anyang, capital of the Yin Dynasty during the latter half of the second millennium B.C., appeared in the shops of local dealers, bronzes of a most exceptional quality, both as to metal, casting and design. Investigations, of which at the present moment I am not allowed to give further particulars, satisfied me that we have in these incomparably beautiful ceremonial vessels authentic specimens of a Shang-Yin bronzemaker's art fully on a par, if not superior, to the best bronze vessels preserved from the later Chou Dynasty. My previous statement, based somewhat on circumstantial evidence, that "the Chou people inherited their art traditions from the conquered Yin Dynasty" has by these new finds been fully corroborated.

II

FEUDAL CHINA

IT IS a strange fact that, in all the tens of thousands of years that it has taken the human race to evolve, the four peoples of antiquity which have more than any other influenced modern civilization—China, India, Israel and Greece—should come to fruition about the same time. Somewhere about 1000 B.C. in each of these lands, men began to sing songs and to keep these songs for posterity in writing. The earliest of China's odes, the *Rig-Veda* of India, the earliest snatches of Hebrew poetry, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*—all date from about this time.

Then another few hundred years, and the world is startled by a birth of thought. Up to this time men had thought what their fathers thought; there were no questionings. Literature consisted of the songs and the priestly lore that must be handed down. Then in all four lands there came a time when men began to question, to challenge, the very foundations of society. Amos, the herdsman of Tekoa, came from the wilderness to the great shrine of Bethel and questioned the efficacy of sacrifice and ritual, the first of the great line of Hebrew prophets, those rebels against the established order in Israel. Buddha refused to live the conventional life of a prince, and rode forth to found a religion that was destined one day to cover half of Asia. It was at this time that Lao Tzū the mystic, and Confucius, the champion of common sense and the gentleman's code, appeared in China, while a hundred years later Socrates at Athens was made to drink the hemlock for teaching new things and corrupting the minds of the youth.

What sort of a China was this, that was contemporary with the great classic period of Israel and Greece? If we look at the history of China and that of Israel at this time, we see a curious parallelism. In each land, at about 1000 B.C. authentic history begins and the first clear dynasty

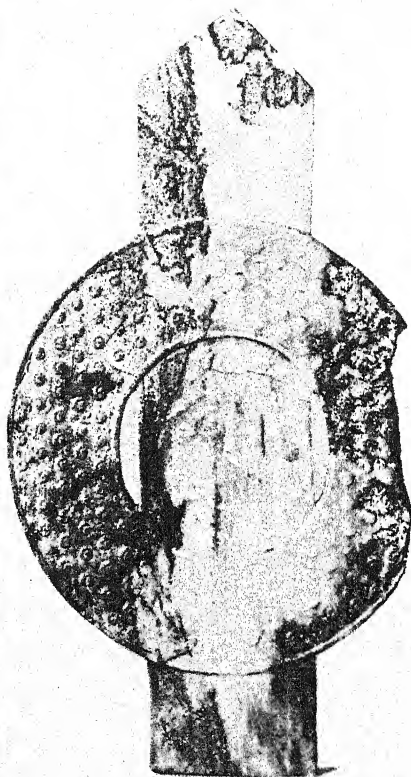
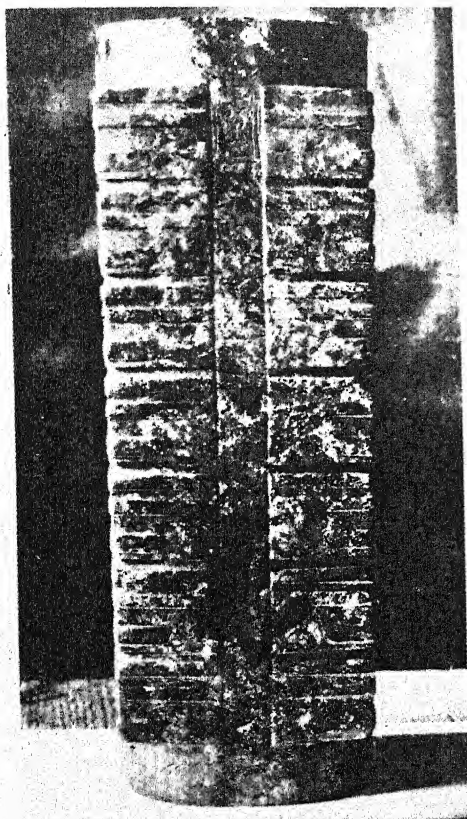
FEUDAL CHINA

emerges. In China, it is the dynasty of Chou founded by the great leaders Wen Wang and his son, Wu Wang. In Israel, it is the house of David, founded by David and his son Solomon. Both dynasties lasted for centuries and in both lands the literature produced through these centuries, the poetry, history, and philosophic lore, has formed the great basis of education of a race, committed to memory by each succeeding generation down to our own day. There is an additional parallelism between China and Israel. Each has records extending a thousand years or more back into a dimmer past: records which are accepted at full face value by the orthodox but regarded by modern scholarship as a blending of later ideals with a certain hazy historic framework, the trustworthiness of which is a matter of controversy.

While in some ways ancient China parallels the history of Israel, in other respects, especially in the days of Confucius and Lao Tzū, there is a much closer parallelism with Greece. Like Greece, China was divided into a number of small states, yet possessed a consciousness of unity which showed itself in a common language and common tradition. Like Greece, too, its greatness was in its philosophers, men of every shade of thought, matching their wits one against the other as they went about the states, seeking to find someone ready to put their principles into practice. There was Hsu Hsing, the Tolstoi or Gandhi of his day, propounding the idea that all men must work with their hands and not leave the plow; there was Mo Ti the pacifist, an apostle of universal love, and Yang Chu the individualist, whose radical doctrines undermined the existing order.

Life at the feudal courts as described in the literature attributed to the period is reminiscent of similar periods in the West, a colorful life of court functions, of hunting and games, interrupted occasionally by the wandering bands of philosophers and their followers, who brought to the gay courts the diversion of intellectual speculation.

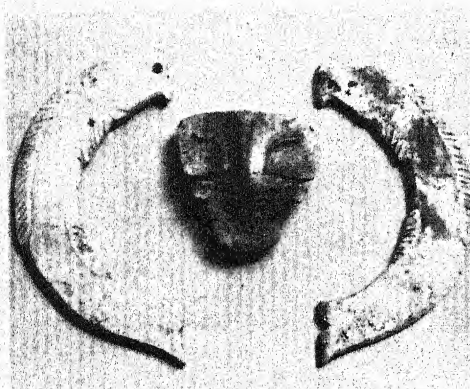
A colorful description of this time was inscribed on ten stone drums which are now in Peking. They are really mountain boulders roughly chiseled into the shape of drums about three feet high. They were rediscovered in the seventh century A.D. in the province of Shensi. An



JADE SYMBOLS

- (a) Earth Symbol. *Gieseler Collection, Paris*
 (b) Symbols of the Sun. *Eumorfopoulos Collection, London* (Round) and the East.

PHOTOS: SIRÈN, HISTORY OF EARLY CHINESE ART



ARCHAIC JADES. *Chou Dynasty (About 500 B.C.)*
Found in the H'sin Cheng Tomb
Metropolitan Museum, New York



JADE ANIMALS (*About 500 B.C.*)
Found in the H'sin Cheng Tomb
Metropolitan Museum, New York

FEUDAL CHINA

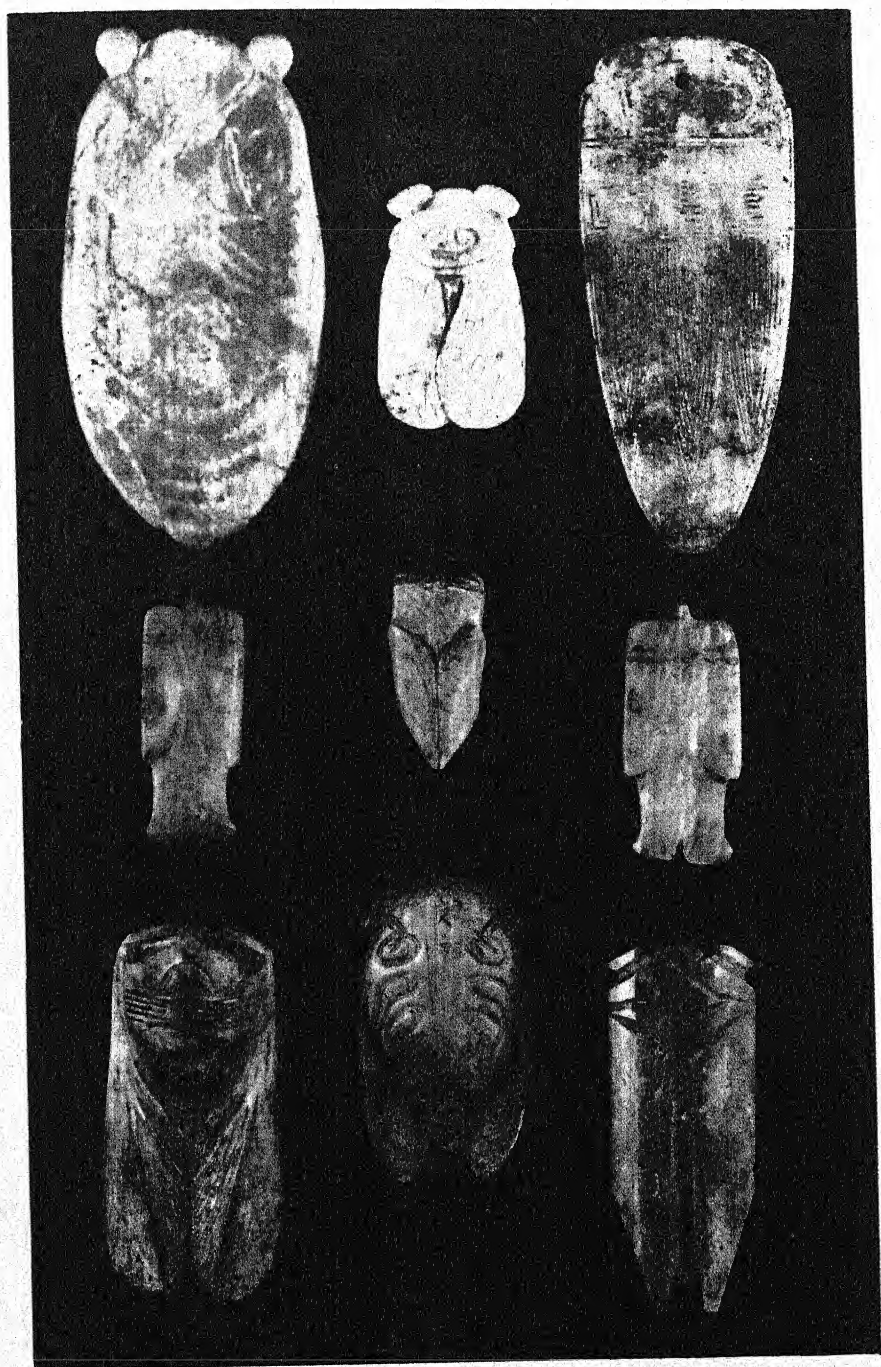
ancestor of the Chous' moved here in 1325 B.C., and Wen Wang, the first emperor of the Chou Dynasty, is said to have made a hunting park on the south side of this mountain. The inscription celebrates in ten odes an imperial hunting and fishing expedition in the country where the drums were found. There is a controversy as to the exact date, but no one has placed them later than the third century B.C. They have at all times been deeply revered by the Chinese. The first of the ten odes runs somewhat as follows:

"Our chariots were solid and strong
Our teams of well-matched steeds;
Our chariots were shining and bright
Our horses all lusty and sleek.
The nobles gathered round for the hunt
And hunted as they closed in the ring.
The hinds and stags bounded on
With the nobles in close pursuit.

Drawing our polished bows of horn
And fitting arrows to the strings,
We drove them over the hills.
The hoofs of the chase resounded,
And they herded the close-packed mass
As the drivers checked their horses.
The hinds and stags pressed on
Till they reached the great hunting park.
We drove on through the forest
And as we found them, one by one,
We shot with our arrow the wild boar and elk."

Translation by Bushell.

Here is one side of the picture: the playful life of a young people, and a vigorous intellectual awakening experimenting with social and political reform movements. On the other side are the solidly entrenched animistic beliefs of the unlettered masses and the carefully nurtured religious



JADE CHICADAS. *Chou Dynasty*
Field Museum, Chicago

FEUDAL CHINA

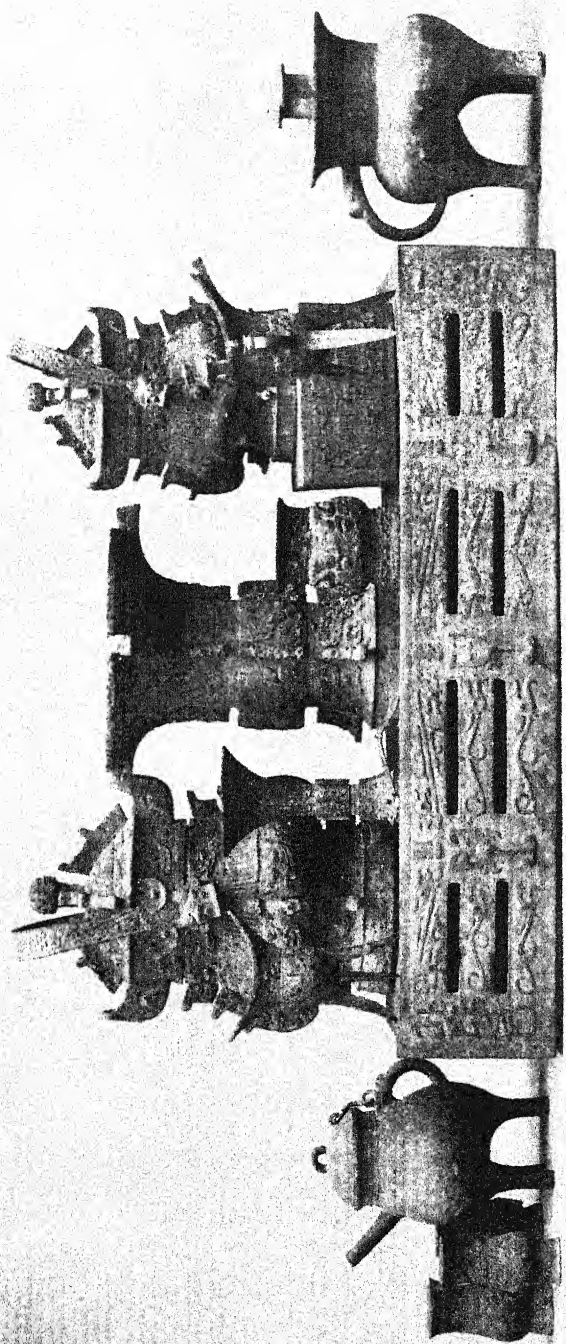
conservatism of the Confucian upper classes, with their roots deeply embedded in the past. This religious conservatism or "Fundamentalism," as that type of religion is called in America today, was well-nigh universal in China twenty-five hundred years ago. Even the most radical philosophers, such as Mo Ti and Yang Chu, found it necessary to show that their novel doctrines had been foreshadowed back in the golden days of Yau and Shun.

There was, however, a great contrast between China and Greece during this period of awakening. The Greek spirit, when it began to break free from the shackles of magic and traditions, broke free in almost every domain of life. When thought found new channels of expression, so did art. Life rather than precedent was the keynote both of Socrates and of Phidias, while in China, judging by the art which has come down to us, the breaking through of the new spirit was only partial. It affected thought profoundly, and many aspects of life, but it did not, so far as we know, at this time affect China's artistic expression. China had to wait yet many centuries until a breath from Greece reached her through Buddhism before her spirit broke entirely free in the domain of art.

The art of the Chou Dynasty which has come down to us is the art of this religious conservatism and it seems very fitting that a great deal of it should be cast in bronze. It is an art of court etiquette, religious ceremonial and of the grave.

In this atmosphere ritual was all important. Court etiquette and religious ritual were identified and possessed all the sanctions of which a precedent-loving race was capable. To Confucius and his school the rigid observance of proper etiquette and form was the very foundation of society.

Religion in China in the first millennium B.C. was a combination of nature and ancestor worship. The material world with its mountains and rivers, its meadows and pastures with herds and cattle, its seasons of sowing and harvest dependent on the fertility of the ground and the fecundity of the flock, all these ideas were expressed in the ancient pieces of jade and bronze that were used in the old ritual. The earth is sym-



SACRIFICIAL ALTAR SET (About 500 B.C.)
Found in Feng Hsiang, Shensi, 1901
Metropolitan Museum, New York

FEUDAL CHINA

bolized by a square, upright, hollow piece of yellow jade; the East by an oblong tablet of green jade; the South by a tablet of reddish jade half the size of the former. A tiger-shaped symbol of white jade represents the West, while the North is symbolized by a semi-circular piece of black jade. Over this orderly universe is Heaven, the active, fructifying principle symbolized by a perforated disc of bluish jade. Judging by the jade symbols which have been preserved, however, it is evident that this theoretical color scheme was not always adhered to, and Karlgren in a recent paper on "Some Fecundity Symbols in Ancient China" gives excellent reasons for his belief that the traditional interpretation does not cover the full and original spiritual significance of these jade symbols. Jade was above everything a "vitality charm" symbolic of the Yang, the male principle. It was put in the mouth of the dead for this reason and used in many other ways in preparing the corpse for burial. The king, preparing himself for the great sacrifice by fasting, should eat powdered jade. His chariot is decorated with jade different from the queen's chariot, which is decorated with pheasant plumes and cowries.

All through Chinese philosophy and thought runs the thread of a positive and a negative principle, the Yang and the Yin, which is expressed most clearly in light and darkness, in the male and the female, in the passive, dark, receptive mother earth and the active, light, rain-giving, fructifying heaven above. To get in touch with these powers on which the individual and common welfare depended, sacrifices must be made. The emperor, the Son of Heaven, sacrifices on behalf of his people. He delegates part of his function to the Feudal Lord who again is represented by the nobles until finally the head of the family offers up sacrifices in the home to She Chi, the god of the ground and grain.

The continuity of the whole system rests with the family, which includes the dead as well as the living, identified through generations with the soil, a continuous chain of which the present is but a link. At regular times and seasons sacrifices are performed in the Ancestral Hall in the home by the oldest son in the principal branch of the family; the Feudal Lord sacrifices in behalf of the state and finally the emperor, the



CEREMONIAL BRONZE VESSEL. *Chou Dynasty (1122-255 B.C.)*

Buckingham Collection

PHOTO: COURTESY THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO



BRONZE WEAPON. *Early Chou Dynasty*

Freer Gallery, Washington, D. C.

PHOTO: COURTESY T. C. YAU

FEUDAL CHINA

Son of Heaven, represents the whole people in the Ancestral Temple of the dynasty.

These sacrifices to the departed spirits have a more personal character than the sacrifices to Heaven and Earth and play a more important rôle in the life of the people, who in this way are brought in contact with the dead. Through the ritual the individual can reach back into the past, and also project himself into the future. His duties lie not only with the dead but extend to the children who are to continue the rites. It calls upon the individual to live in such a manner that he shall become an ancestor worthy of his children. At death he becomes himself an ancestral spirit and from that moment the death cult begins.

This expressed itself first in a great care for the dead body, in which jade was used in many different ways. It is not impossible that some of these objects found in the grave had been used by the living as amulets—jade charms are to this day worn by the Chinese—but we do know that they were used extensively in preparing the corpse for burial. Various jade symbols were placed on the eyes, in the ears and in the nostrils of the dead. The most frequent object found is the cicada, the image of an insect which, during the winter, is encased in a chrysalis and comes to life in the spring. It was placed on the tongue of the dead and symbolized, no doubt, a hope of immortality, a renewal of life. A Chinese poet in the eleventh century A.D. wrote:

“Are you not he, cicada,
Of whom I have heard told you can transform
Your body, magically moulding it
To new estate. Are you not he who born
Upon the dung-heap, coveted the sky,
The clean and open air;”

Translation by Arthur Waley in *The Temple*.

The symbols of Heaven and Earth and of the Four Quarters have often been found in graves and also many jade objects picturing animal forms and fabulous creatures, the meaning of which we do not fully understand. The fish is a constantly recurring symbol, of which we



SACRIFICIAL VESSEL. BRONZE
Freer Gallery, Washington, D. C.

PHOTO: COURTESY T. C. YAU

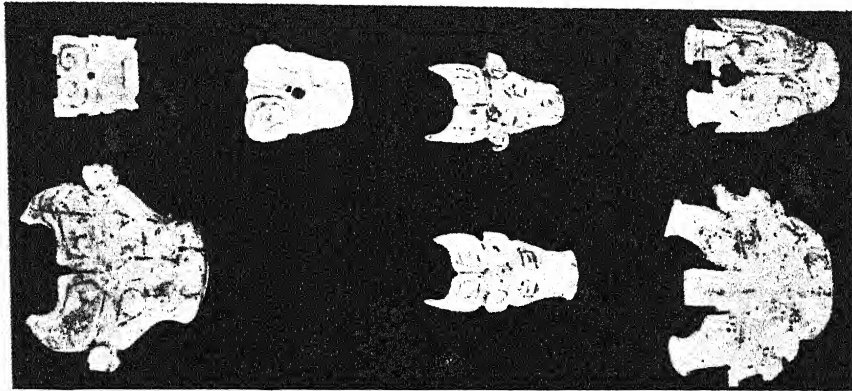
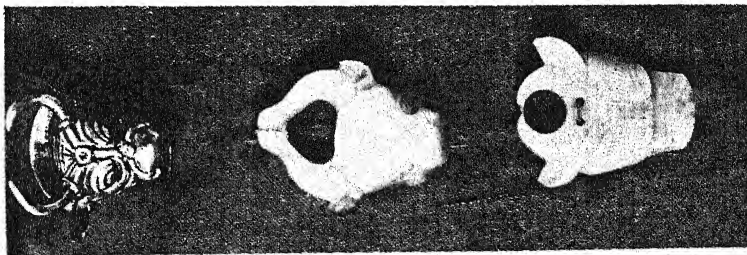
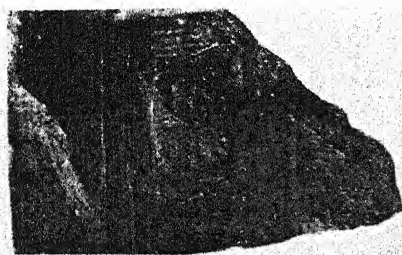
FEUDAL CHINA

also do not know a great deal except that in later art two fishes together symbolize connubial bliss, but so does a pair of ducks and other birds. The great fecundity of the fish may possibly account for its inclusion in the jade symbols. It is a symbol used in other lands besides China.

After the body was made ready for the grave there followed the most elaborate funeral preparations extending over weeks, months or years according to the social position of the dead and the economic condition of the family. The more affluent graves consisted of several fair-sized chambers which were covered by large earth mounds. The grave-chambers were lined with stones, sometimes carved, or with bricks, painted in a few instances, but more often decorated with stamped impressions of animal and human forms. Some excellent art, from the later Han Dynasty, has been found on these stones and bricks which will be described in a later chapter. The grave was then furnished with numberless objects, images of things which the dead had enjoyed in life.

There is every indication that immolation was used in ancient China. Confucius and Mencius in their writings warn the people against using even inanimate straw figures because they suggested living sacrifices. As there is no indication of human sacrifices in stone-age graves it may possibly have been a custom introduced by the barbarians from the great beyond. Herodotus' description of the terrible burial customs of the Scythian chiefs in South Russia shows that animals as well as retainers were buried with the chiefs.

Though it is most likely that the Classical period in China had other forms of art, an art for the living as well as for the dead, except for the symbolic jades, the only art objects which have been preserved from this period are the great ritual bronzes. Some have been excavated from graves, but from literary sources and observances, continued almost down to the present day, we know they were used to a larger extent in the ritual on the altar. More than twenty magnificent forms were made to contain the meat, the grain, the cakes, the fruit and the wine sacrificed on the altar to the spirits of Heaven and Earth and to the departed ancestors. Each form had its name and a definite function in the ritual. As many have inscriptions, they have also considerable historical value.



BULLS' HEADS OF POTTERY, JADE AND SILVER

- (a) Pottery Fragments Excavated at Anyang (Approximately 1200 B.C.) *Academia Sinica*
- (b) Chou Dynasty Bulls' Heads (Approximately 500 B.C.) *Lawyer, Archaic Chinese Idols*
- (c) Modern Bull's Head Charms, Silver and Jade (1930 A.D.) *Author's Collection*

FEUDAL CHINA

Chinese scholars down through the ages have written many volumes dedicated to a study of these precious objects.

Until the recent discoveries of the stone-age ceramics, these early bronzes came down to modern times like the orphans of a noble family of whom we knew very little. We knew there must have been many generations evolving an art so perfect, but except for references in books of a later date the past was a closed book until among neolithic ceramics were found prototypes for a few of the forms and shapes of the historic bronzes. But the ornamentation, which is almost without exception a more or less conventionalized Animal Style design, gives another impression. With its ogres and monsters and weird animal forms it seems to have nothing in common with the gentle spiral and geometric designs of the stone-age artists.

The most frequently recurring symbol is the so-called *t'ao-t'ieh*. Who and what the *t'ao-t'ieh* was no one knows. The words apparently mean voracious glutton. In the ancient books the name appears just once as one of the four monsters whom the ancient Emperor Shun thrust into outer darkness. All we do know is that he always tried to reappear worked into the design in a new and unlooked for way. Chi Li has given a possible clue by showing a series of Shang Dynasty bulls' heads from the second millennium B.C. excavated at Anyang, developing from a realistic to a conventionalized form. The latter forms could hardly be recognized as the head of a bull were it not for the series with which it is connected. He suggests that the *t'ao-t'ieh* may be a conventionalized form of the Shang Dynasty bull's head. In the earliest phase which he has, it appears on the sides of pottery vessels. It is plainly a bull's head for it has horns as well as ears, large eyes and a broad nose. On a recent visit to the interior province of Shansi, I purchased in the shops four small new heads of this type, three made of white jade and one of silver. They all had perforated holes by which they could be attached to the clothing. I was told that they were usually sewed onto the head bands of women who wanted children—a survival no doubt of an ancient fecundity cult.

In Chinese mythology the development of human society has been

FEUDAL CHINA

personified by three emperors, the "Three August Ones": Fu Hsi, who invented the rites of marriage and of the giving of presents, Shên Nung, "the sovereign with the head of an ox," who made the plow and taught the laws of agriculture, and who is also said to have made the first potteries, and Huang Ti, "who invented arms and was a metal worker."

As the *t'ao-t'ieh* appears most frequently on the vessels which contained the food and grain used in sacrifices, we may find that we have in this design a symbol which harks back to early agrarian rites. "The ancestral cult, *i.e.*, the cult of the dead in ancient China," Karlgren says, "was at the same time and above all a fecundity cult, intended to ensure resurrection, vitality and propagation of the family line. If this is the reason for its intimate connection with the fertility cult, the cult of the soil—a highly natural primitive logic, as shown by ample parallels all over the world—then it is reasonable to expect that the decorations of the bronzes used in the ancestral cult, the thunder pattern, dragon, and the pheasant, should have a votive significance."

To what extent, if at all, the Eurasian Animal Style Art outlined in the next chapter had anything to do with the development of these designs, we cannot tell as yet. Future research and excavations will no doubt bring interesting revelations in this alluring field. We can at any rate feel certain now that the designs on the bronzes were also not an art for art's sake only, but that here, as in the case of the stone-age artists, religious and magic beliefs gave the artist his main inspiration.

III

NOMAD INVASIONS

THE land beyond the Chinese borders, Central Asia and the land north of it, was in the first millennium B.C. and probably much earlier occupied by many nomadic tribes. The most important earliest written information about these tribes in the West is found in the fourth book of Herodotus from the fifth century B.C. His description of Scythia and the tribes which lived beyond her borders has, in the past, caused a great deal of speculation and has often been considered fantastic and unreliable. Herodotus himself, after relating the stories which he has heard from others, adds, in his inimical fashion, that he doubts if such incredible stories can be true.

Recently, however, Herodotus' narrative has been given renewed consideration by G. F. Hudson in his admirable book, *Europe and China*. By synchronizing the available historical data and geographical descriptions, making due allowance for the inevitable geographical inaccuracies in ancient books, Hudson has established convincing proofs supporting the belief that there was in the middle of the first millennium B.C. a territory from South Russia across Asia occupied by nine definitely designated tribes. Without subscribing to Hudson's theory as to whom the Hyperboreans may have been, the rest of the list brings us at least near to the borders of China.

As none of these tribes left any writing or symbols whereby their history could be passed on to succeeding generations, it is a part of human history where one has to begin with conjecture, hoping that the archæologist will be able, in years to come, to correct mistakes and throw new light on the problem.

DeMorgan, after a long and illustrious career as an archæologist in various fields, wrote in his book, *Prehistoric Man*, a last chapter which

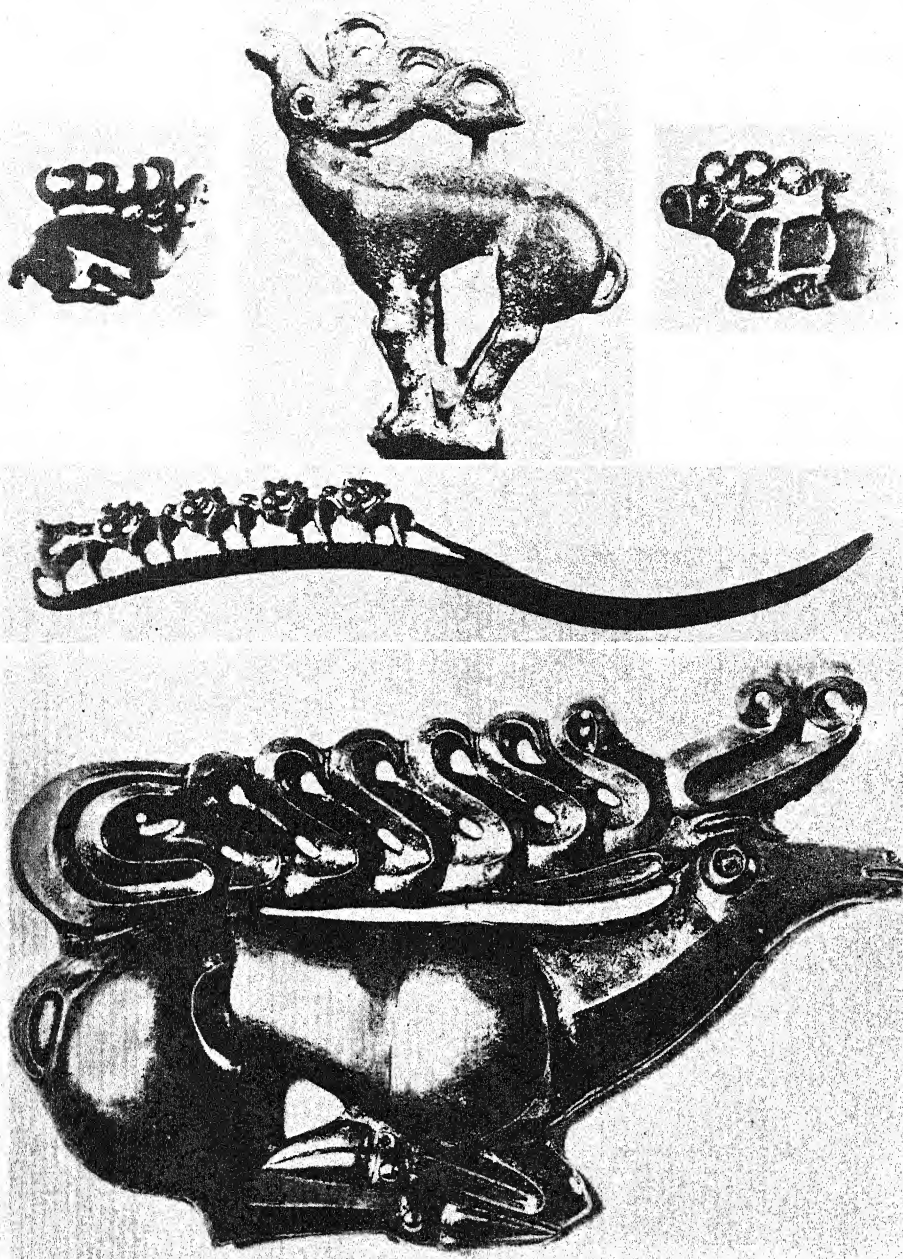
NOMAD INVASIONS

he called "Inferential Conclusions," in which he says: "The close of the Quarternary period saw the breaking down of the barriers which had hitherto shut off different portions of the old world. The glaciers gradually retreated to become limited to Polar regions and the summits of high mountains. Lakes fed by the snows dried up and the gates of Northern Asia were thrown wide open. It was a great reservoir of men which was to empty itself, if we may judge by post-Quarternary events, in successive floods throughout thousands of years into our part of the world—each creative or destructive wave invariably modifying existing conditions."

However much or little one can subscribe to this theory, geological facts, which show that Northern Asia did not have an ice-age, and the subsequent history of Asia and Eastern Europe make it a workable hypothesis. On both sides of Asia as far back as history goes we read about attacks and inroads of barbarian hordes from the North. The history of the Mesopotamian Valley shows a singular parallelism to the history of China in this respect. The characteristics and effects of the invading Kassite in Babylon in the second millennium B.C. are strangely reminiscent of the characteristics of the Mongol Dynasty in China nearly three thousand years later.

Chinese history opens up with the accounts of raids from the North. The *Bamboo Books* are mostly the annals of the exploits of these hordes: "White Hordes, Red Hordes, Dark Hordes, Yellow Hordes," sometimes victorious but more often bringing tribute to Chinese rulers. In the book *Tso-chuan*, it is told how "the virtuous rulers of the Hsia Dynasty (2200-1766) received tribute from distant lands in the form of models of objects and of metal from 'the Nine Regions,' that tripods were cast with images of all kinds of objects in order that the people might know which were the good spirits and which the evil ones and might, when they went into the mountains and forests and over the lakes, avoid meeting ghosts and monsters." (Translation by Tsai Yuan-peï.) This paragraph gives support to the theory that Chinese bronze making was an imported art.

Some of these nomad tribes in their raids, which came as an avalanche



THE ANIMAL STYLE ART OF EURASIA

- (a) Suiyuan. *Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm*
- (b) Suiyuan. *Eumorfopoulos Collection*
- (c) Suiyuan. *Worth Collection*
- (d) Suiyuan. *Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm*
- (e) Scythian. *Hermitage, Leningrad*

PHOTOS: SIRÈN, HISTORY OF EARLY CHINESE ART

NOMAD INVASIONS

of terror into the civilizations of the old world, one tribe often pursued by another, brought with them an art, executed in gold, silver and bronze, which took its designs almost entirely from the animal world. It is the discovery of this art which at last is helping us to find the trail to this finished part of the world and its buried history.

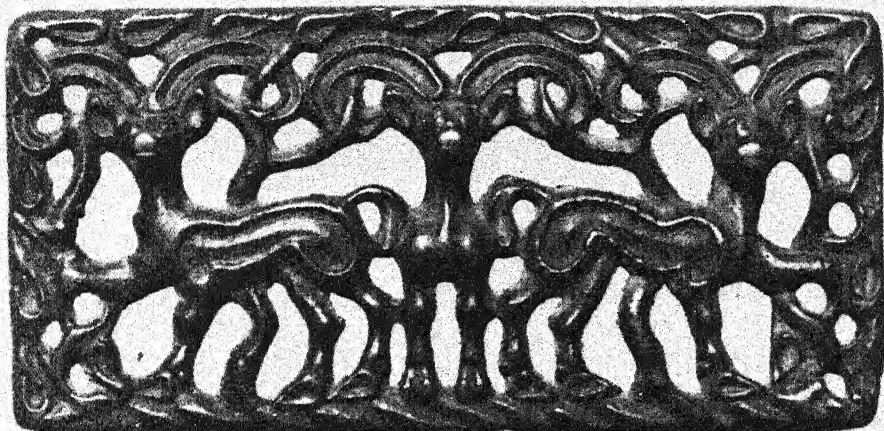
The first treasures of this type were found a hundred years ago in the graves of Scythian chiefs in South Russia and Siberia from the fourth to the seventh century B.C. The early collections, which soon came under the protection of the Russian royal house, have been increased by later excavations and form today the most unique and fascinating exhibit in the Leningrad Museum. The objects here are nearly all made of silver and gold, used in the burial of the dead either as ornamentation on the clothing and swords, as belts, buckles, breast-plates and masks, or as vases and other objects surrounding the dead.

With very few exceptions these objects are decorated with a design made up entirely of animal forms, for which the artists quite often did not use naturalistic models. The Scythian artists succeeded, nevertheless, in creating a remarkable sense of life and movement in these weird designs of interlocking animal forms in pursuit, in combat, in the act of devouring their prey or in a single ornamental beast. Even in the most conventionalized designs this sense of movement remains the abiding characteristic.

The artists show an unusual sense of line. The horns, tail and other extremities of one animal are often finished off with the head of another beast or bird, with no relationship to each other except the artistic curves and lines which leave not a single space uncovered.

In some instances animals have been sculptured in the round as an ornamental finish to pole-tops or as knife handles, but more often the design is executed in low relief with the ornamental plaques done in an openwork pattern.

The Minusinsk Museum in Siberia has also a large collection of objects with a design strikingly similar to the objects in the Leningrad Museum; and farther west Finnish scholars have located another area where objects with a similar design have been found in the Ananino region on the



ORDOS PLAQUES. BRONZE
Metropolitan Museum, New York

NOMAD INVASIONS

Asiatic side of Finland. The Siberian objects are usually made of bronze and are particularly rich in knives of a great variety of shapes.

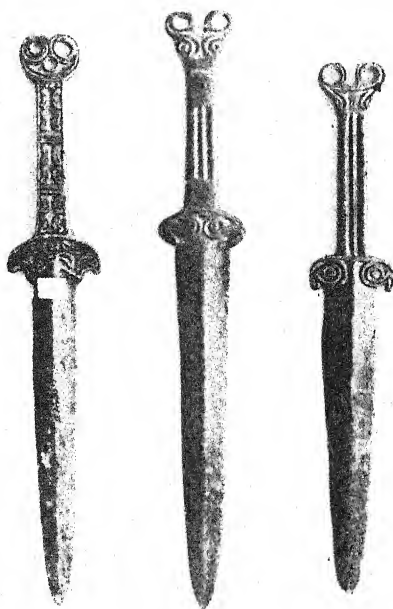
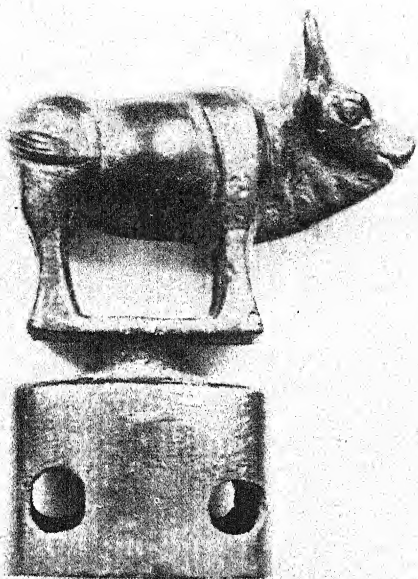
Another province of this striking art has within the last few years been located in the Luristan region in Persia. Very few of these objects have been excavated and have consequently been difficult to date, but the most recent developments point to a very early background.

In contrast to the Scythian and Siberian objects and objects found on the Chinese border, the more elaborate Luristan plaques show often a grotesque human figure with marked aquiline features and short legs, singularly suggestive of Hittite stone sculpture and a nomadic type sometimes found in Chinese art. The perfect modeling and loveliness of the animal forms, which are often symmetrically arranged on both sides of the human figure, make a striking contrast to the grotesque human images. Although undoubtedly related to the whole field of the Eurasian Animal Style Art, the Luristan bronzes have features which indicate developments along distinctive lines, features suggesting the beliefs and art of the various peoples of Asia Minor and the Mesopotamian Valley.

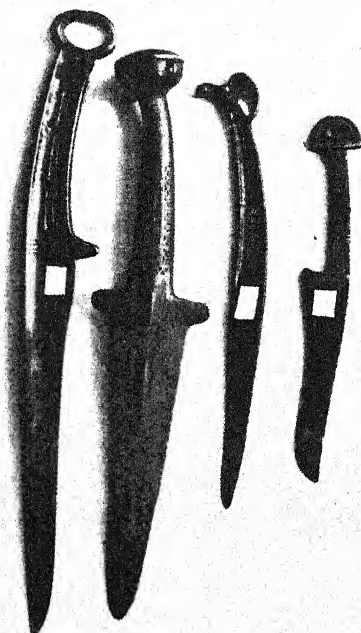
Excavations have also been made recently in the Eastern Altai Mountains by M. P. Giaznow of the Russian State Museum. "The Nomads of the Steppes," to quote from an article in the *London Illustrated News*, "though constantly moving within their grazing territory, were nevertheless accustomed to bury their dead in more or less definite localities, which came to have the nature of clan cemeteries for the various groups. The Altai Mountains abound with such group burials, usually in chains of 'kurgans' (barrows) running from north to south."

The grave excavated by Giaznow was that of a chief which, although in a plundered condition, yet revealed a great deal of interesting material in the ornamentation of the well-preserved sarcophagus decorated with figures of birds. A felt carpet had appliqué decorations of lion heads and other miscellaneous objects.

Of greater interest, however, was that part of the burial chamber devoted to the burial of the chief's mounts where the frozen and well-preserved bodies of ten horses were found. "Each horse was furnished



ORDOS BRONZES
William Mayer Collection

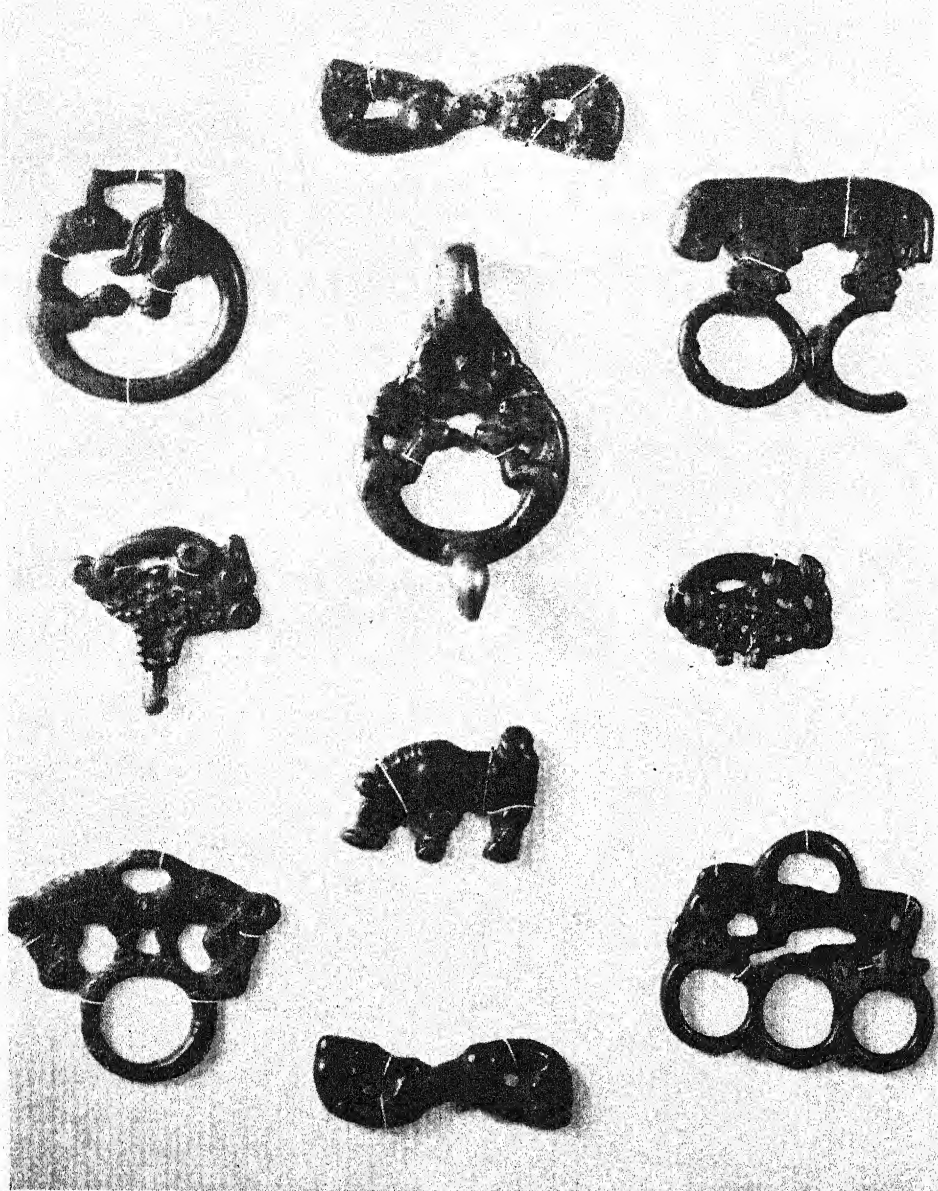


NOMAD INVASIONS

with suitable trappings, saddles and bridles. Two horses had masks ingeniously patterned of felt, leather, fur and gold leaf. . . . All the objects as well as the bodies were found in an extraordinary state of preservation and reveal a highly developed culture and a peculiar art in which the so-called 'animal style' predominates. The saddles were covered with frets richly decorated and embroidered. The bridles and the saddle-trappings had numerous carved wood pendants covered with gold and silver leaf. The main covers, made of felt and leather and dyed horse hair, were decorated with the figures of birds and the tail cover was also ornamented. The masks were especially intricately made to represent in one case the head of a reindeer with horns of natural size and the other a griffin struggling with a bear. . . . Eagles, elks, reindeer, mountain goats, bears, fish and human faces are represented in the rich art of this little known culture."

A large group belonging to this international Animal Style Art has been found on the Chinese border, and has been named the Ordos bronzes, from the Ordos desert where many of these small bronzes, with a design strikingly similar to the designs on the Scythian, Siberian and Luristan objects, have come from. They had evidently been used here as ornaments, probably for the living as well as for the dead. The objects show a great variety of naturalistic and conventionalized designs. The rectangular plaques, which may have been used as ornaments on swords or as buckles, are the more elaborate. A large group consists of small single animal figures, some naturalistic, depicting the bear, the deer, the tiger and the ram, but at other times, although giving a life-like impression, the artist has created an animal form the like of which there never was on land or sea.

The work shows invariably the skilled artist. In a collection purchased by the writer during the last two years in Peiping, Mongolia and in the Suiyuan Province, a hit and miss collection of more than three hundred pieces for laboratory use, only two pieces can be said to have been made by an amateur designer. The objects show always a keen sense of linear development, with a tendency to elongation, perfect proportions and a delightful composition.



ORDOS BRONZES
Author's Collection

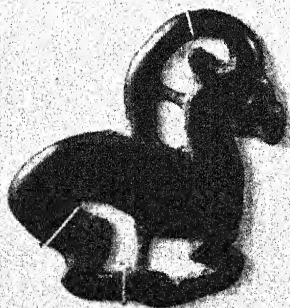
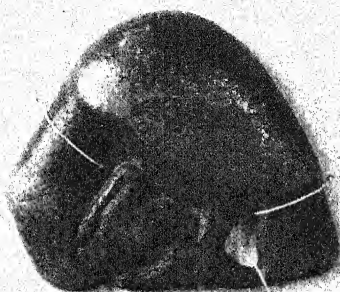
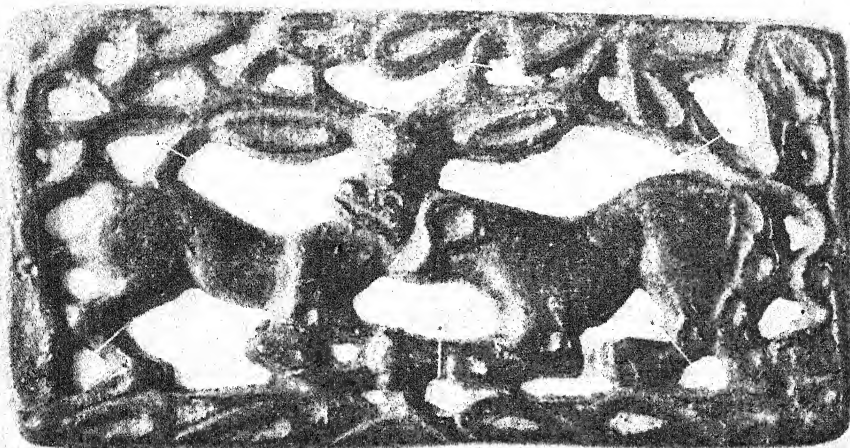
NOMAD INVASIONS

Most of the objects which are in the hands of a few museums and collectors have been obtained through dealers and are consequently difficult to date. There are three tomb finds, one in the Metropolitan Museum in New York and two in the Stockholm Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, but all are of so uncertain antecedents that one hesitates to draw too definite conclusions from them as to date.

Until more archæological material has been excavated we shall have to content ourselves with the important facts that we have in these small bronzes, found on the Chinese border, members of an international family of art which is almost daily extending its ramifications, and secondly that they represent unquestionably a cult of magic which has been continued for more than two thousand years and probably much longer. The earliest Ordos bronzes extant have been ascribed to the first three centuries B.C., and the Mongolians to this day wear these objects on their clothing, whenever they find them, and fasten them to their milk pails.

It has been questioned whether this art, found on the Chinese border, should be included in a description of Chinese art. We do not know where or how these objects were made. I asked the dealers in Suiyuan where they came from and they always answered, "from the west" or "from across the river," meaning by that the Ordos desert. From this one might conclude that the Animal Style Art had remained a foreign art. There is, however, clear evidence in some of the designs of an infiltration of Chinese influences, a tendency which shows that the art was either adopted by the Chinese or the nomads became influenced by Chinese art and thought.

This art, which no doubt was born in the wild and reared in the great open spaces, could seemingly not maintain itself among the world's civilizations. It became symmetrical and domesticated under Chinese influence and anthropomorphic and ornamental under Greek influence. The nomad Scythian chiefs, who settled around the Black Sea in the first millennium B.C., came in close touch with Greek colonists and the influence of Greek art can clearly be seen in the Scythian objects in Leningrad. The human form, practically unknown in Siberian and



ORDOS BRONZES
Author's Collection

NOMAD INVASIONS

Ordos specimens, is here seen; and the ruthless animals of uninhibited instincts, attacking each other in wild combat, seen best in the objects ascribed to Siberia, have become placid, ornamental and conventionalized. That the art of the nomads became influenced and changed by contacts with settled superior civilizations seems to be further proved by the finds made in the Caucasus. This place, out of the way from the civilizations of the old world, had little artistically to contribute and we find here but little change in the conventionalized designs ascribed to an early date and those ascribed to centuries later.

Where then did this fascinating, tantalizing, beautiful art have its beginnings? Beautiful in its endless imaginative play of surprising lines and curves, in its perfect proportions and in the remarkable technique of the designer's hand. Fascinating because it is a young, singularly modern face which is looking at us through its ancient garb and tantalizing because we know not how it came to be, nor where or why it disappeared into the mist of the world's past.

Little as we know about the "hordes" who made this strange art, still less do we know where they disappeared. What became of the Gutes, the Kassites, the Hittites, the Scythians, Sarmatians, the Argippaei, the Budinis, the Issedones, as well as the many Hsiung-nu tribes from the Chinese annals? Chinese history answers the question in part as we find how the nomad conquerors of the Six Dynasties Period and the later Mongols, as well as the Manchus in our own time, became absorbed or departed, not to be heard from again, leaving only a colorful page in China's long history.

One wonders if the strong resemblance which much early Scandinavian art has to that of China can be accounted for by some of these wandering tribes finding their way to the far North. When the history of the European migrations in the early centuries of our era is more fully investigated, we shall perhaps know more about this problem.

The hordes and their chieftains have vanished and no monuments or inscriptions are left to tell their tale, except these little metal objects, the origin of which, who can tell, may hark back to a time when primitive hunters whittled on their household implements of wood and bone

NOMAD INVASIONS

to shorten the long evenings in their caves, where the walls were decorated with animal forms which to them symbolized good luck, increase of the flock and the prevention of evil.

Besides the two questions as to where they came from and whither these people went, there is a third question, the answer to which we may find before we find an answer to the other two. What did this art mean? We feel certain that here again we face an art that was not merely an art for art's sake. Man's instinctive search for protection against the enemies of his life and the never dying hope of a life after this led him to create symbols which to him signified life-inspiring and protecting principles. These he brought not only in touch with the living, but they were also brought in contact with the lifeless body to express a hope of immortality. It is an art which no doubt was inspired by the same fundamental human emotions that inspired the world's earliest known art found in the caves of paleolithic man.

To what extent, or if at all, the paleolithic animal art influenced the later Eurasian Animal Style Art we do not know. Until more research in this field has been made we must content ourselves with a circumstantial evidence which points in the direction of a common origin of customs and beliefs. To what extent the Animal Style designs found on the Ordos bronzes influenced the designs on the Chinese ceremonial bronzes and how early this influence began, we also cannot tell. Chinese history from the time of the stone-age potters to the Chou bronze makers is silent. But we do know that the nomad invaders, who from a very early time, almost down to the present day, have continued to come into China with their barbarian hordes bringing storm and conflict to a peaceful people, prone to become static in their enjoyment of the good things in life, brought also with them new customs, new ideas and an art which so obviously influenced Chinese art that to get a true perspective of its development as a whole one has to consider the influences and the art of the nomads.

Until more research has thrown light on this problem one is tempted to play with the idea that this nomad influence had a share in changing the spiral and geometric designs of the stone-age agricultural artists to

NOMAD INVASIONS

the strange designs on the later bronzes. With their brutal-looking monsters and uncanny beasts, however conventionalized these may be, they point to a hunter's life far removed from the peaceful settled tillers of the soil.

IV

THE EMPIRE BUILDER

AS FAR back as Chinese history goes nomad invasions made the northwest China's danger spot. Through this gateway came in a long succession horde after horde of ravaging barbarians known under various names but nevertheless more or less related and with many abiding characteristics in common. The border states, in their constant conflict with these nomad hordes, had produced a hardy military aggressive type in which, quite possibly, there was a considerable mixture of the nomads and the Chinese, a type which over and over again brought new vitality to the Chinese civilization.

The "Prince of the West," the founder of the Chou Dynasty, came from this borderland to be the avenging angel whom the gods had sent to take away the throne from the pleasure-loving emperors of the Yin Dynasty. And eight hundred years later when the Chou Dynasty had played itself out, with the numerous small states constantly at war with each other, it was from this same northwest that the great empire builder, Ch'in Shih Huang-ti, appeared. During the declining centuries of the Chou confederacy the border states of Ch'in in the northwest and Ch'u on both sides of the Yangtze River became dominating factors in the political reconstruction and also in the development of Chinese art during the latter part of the first millennium B.C.

During the fourth century B.C., while the central states of the Chou confederacy were wasting their strength in an internal warfare from which there was nothing to gain, the state of Ch'in had been experimenting with social and economic reforms which were destined to influence her future development profoundly. Through a progressive prince and his remarkable minister Wei Yang, a radical change of land tenure was brought about. The farmers who, up to this time, had tilled the

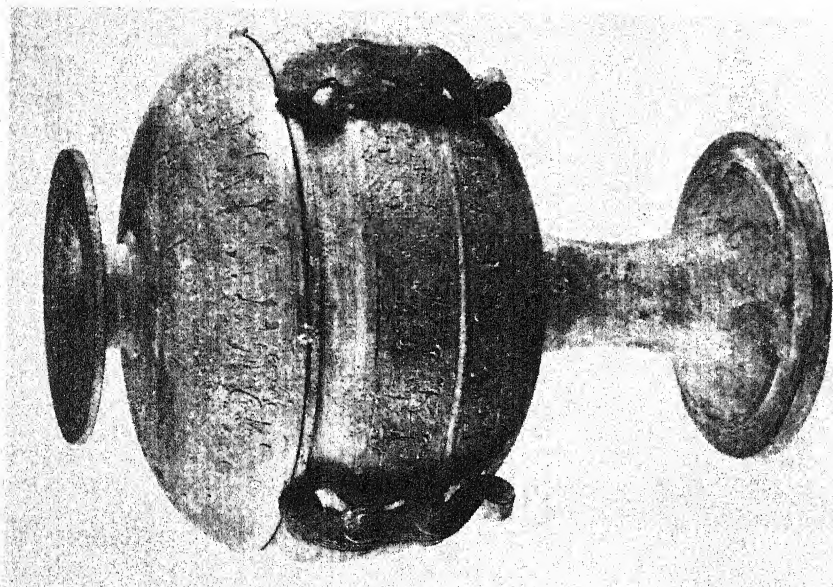
THE EMPIRE BUILDER

land for the nobles on a percentage basis of one-tenth for the farmers, became by a royal decree entitled to purchase the land they were on, and the land was then taxed by the state, mostly in kind. The result of this change was a wave of prosperity which enabled the rulers of Ch'in to engage in extensive military expeditions against neighboring tribes. China became known during this time throughout Asia as the land of Ch'in, the origin of the name China by which it is known in the West to this day.

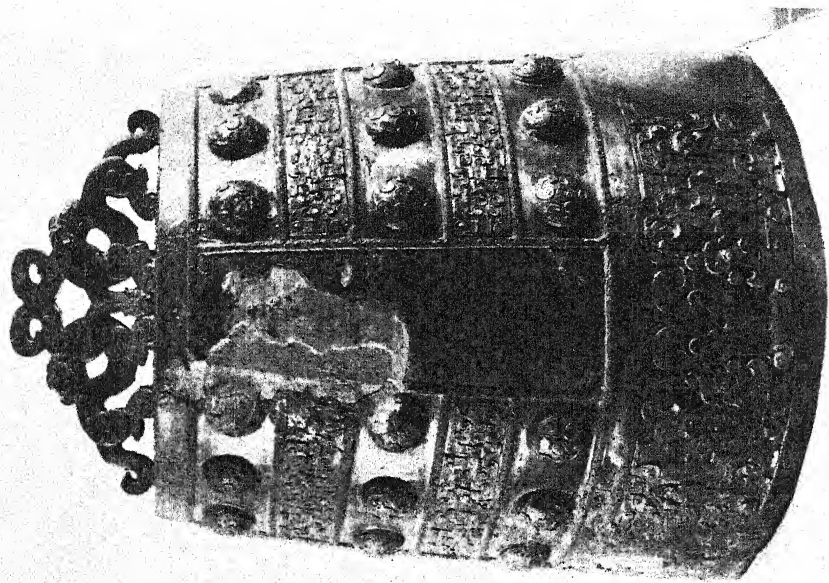
When Shih Huang-ti appeared on the scene in the third century B.C., the state of Ch'in had, for more than a century, been recognized as the most formidable military power in the Chou confederacy. The neighboring barbarian tribes had been subjugated and the state organized way ahead of its contemporaries. The political decline of the central states became the great opportunity for the new ruler. In several whirlwind campaigns, he conquered one after another of the contending states and found himself, before his death, the emperor of them all.

The social and economic changes which so successfully had been tried out in the state of Ch'in were now imposed on the rest of China, but in doing this the emperor ran up against a formidable antagonist. The conservative Confucian scholars, who had been going about among the feudal states suggesting to the rulers of the day their philosophical and religious palliatives for the disintegration of the time, watched with growing hostility the activities of the new emperor. They saw war no longer considered a Heaven-sent judgment on inefficient, depraved rulers who had forfeited Heaven's protection, but made a tool in the hands of an ambitious war lord, who slaughtered people by the tens of thousands in his ruthless advances, all in order to impose on the people a new form of government which was diametrically opposed to the existing feudal system and its prerogatives of a hereditary nobility.

To stop the opposition of these conservatives the emperor ordered the burning of all the ancient books—written on bamboo, as paper was not invented until the second century A.D.—except the annals of Ch'in and some books on practical and technical matters. This conflagration started a hatred which has never been extinguished. Down through the



CEREMONIAL BRONZE VESSEL
Huai Style (3rd-4th century B.C.)
 Metropolitan Museum, New York



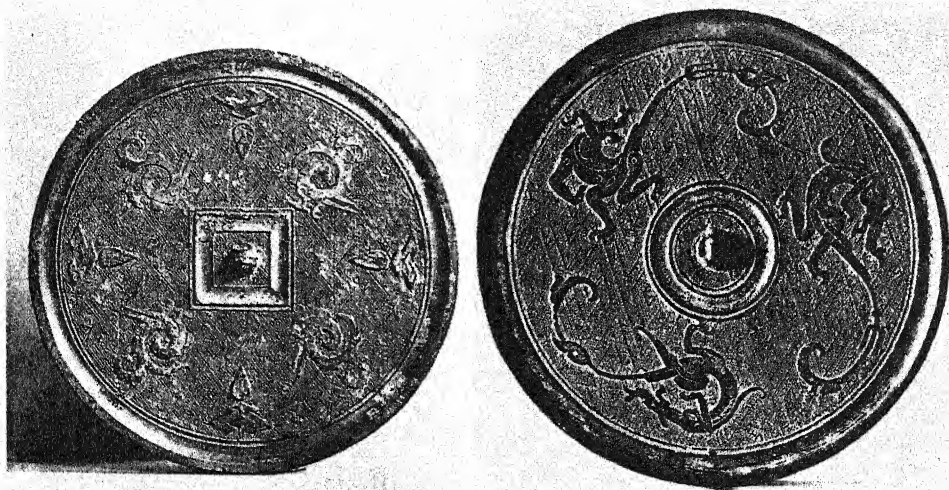
BRONZE BELL
Huai Style (3rd-4th century B.C.)
 Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm
 PHOTO: COURTESY DR. J. G. ANDERSSON

THE EMPIRE BUILDER

centuries Shih Huang-ti has been hated as no other man in Chinese history. Chinese historians have never been able to find any ameliorating circumstances in the greatness of the man and in the gigantic task which he accomplished, when in a dozen years he brought order out of the chaos of a finished feudal system by bringing the warring states together in a united domain, thereby laying the foundation for a form of government which, later vested in a system of civil service examinations, has been the Chinese state ideal down to the present day.

The political reconstruction, however, was not the only change which came at this time. The intellectual awakening and religious experimentation of the preceding centuries had undermined the ancient worship, which was the very foundation of the feudal system. When the barbarian element in the Ch'in House and the illiteracy of the founder of the following Han Dynasty gave official sanction to all kinds of magic and witchcraft, the balanced, rational religion of the upper class Confucian element became eclipsed by the more spiritual Taoism with its superstitious tendencies.

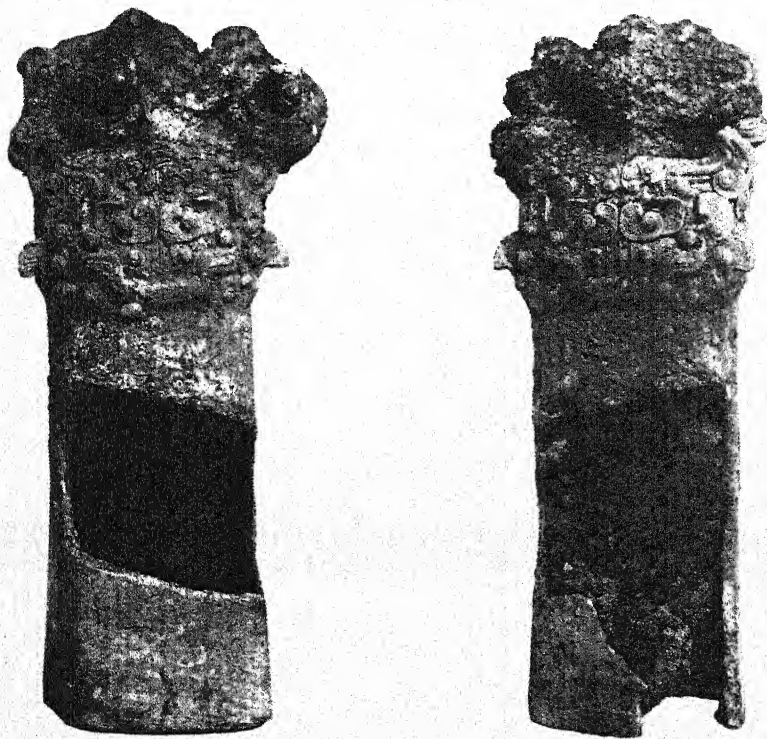
This change in religious emphasis may have been partly responsible for the deviation from the traditionally prescribed forms of the bronzes which could now be observed. More ornamental shapes were coming in, tall vases, low-legged containers and round bowls. While the earlier designs, to a degree, were continued, the sharp, strong reliefs of the designs on the Chou bronzes disappeared almost entirely, leaving an almost flat surface. During the later Han period many bronzes were made without any designs whatsoever. To this group belong the thin, delicately shaped bowls of silvery bronze, often with a black finish. As we do not know of any artistic characteristics which distinguish the fifty years of the Ch'in Dynasty from the previous and the following fifty years, what is known as Ch'in art, and there is a great deal of it, designates more often the art produced during the third and second century B.C., and this would include the end of the Chou as well as the beginning of the Han Dynasty. As designating the art of the period of transition between the Chou and Han periods, the term Ch'in, if used in the his-



BRONZE MIRRORS FROM HUAI RIVER VALLEY

- (a) *Worch*
- (b) *Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm*

PHOTOS: SIRÈN, HISTORY OF EARLY CHINESE ART



CARRIAGE FITTINGS. BRONZE. *Huai Style* (3rd-4th century, B.C.)

British Museum

PHOTO: COURTESY ORVAR KARLBECK

THE EMPIRE BUILDER

torical sense, is then a misnomer. It will no doubt bring clarity to have the name dropped altogether.

A group of bronzes which during the last few years have been located in Honan and in the Huai River Valley and which so far have been ambiguously called Ch'in, has fortunately focussed the attention on the whole problem of the so-called Ch'in bronzes. During the Chou Dynasty the state of Ch'u in the South on both sides of the Yangtze River, like Ch'in in the North, served as a buffer state against the barbarians. Like their contemporary in the North the Ch'u people may have had a mixed origin. In early Chinese records the country south of the Yangtze River was considered a wild place occupied by the "Man-barbarians" who were described as a heavily bearded people, a distinctly non-mongoloid characteristic.

For centuries the development of the states of Ch'in and Ch'u seems to have run somewhat along parallel lines, with a gradual adoption of the Chinese civilization of the central states and a steady extension of territory by military conquest. The borders of the Ch'u kingdom were moved across the Yangtze and extended almost to the borders of Honan where it was finally checked by the complete domination under Shih Huang-ti's supreme command in the third century B.C.

This group of bronzes, a few from Honan but mostly found near the city of Shouchou in the Huai River Valley in the territory of the ancient state of Ch'u, have nearly all been located by Orvar Karlbeck, a Swedish civil engineer who for many years was connected with the Chinese railways not far from Shouchou. With the exception of a number of vessels, suggestive in shape of Han bronzes, the Huai River Valley objects are small, consisting of horse-trappings, carriage-fittings, weapons, buckles, belt-hooks and a large group of bronze mirrors. Nearly all these objects are recognized by an exquisite greyish-green patina.

The use of the *t'ao-t'ieh* mask and the coiling dragon is suggestive of the designs on the Chou Dynasty vessels, but the constantly recurring bird motive on the Huai bronzes and the obvious greater freedom of these southern artists indicate distinctly an evolution along different lines. Compared to the refinement and sophistication of the Huai de-

THE EMPIRE BUILDER

signs, which consist largely of more or less fluted bands and dragons intricately interwoven on a background in which the spiral motive is used almost exclusively, the Chou Dynasty bronzes seem almost barbaric in their brutal strength and rugged strong reliefs.

The mirrors found in the Huai River Valley have been a revelation. These usually round metal discs with the design on the reverse side of the brightly polished surface, which was actually used by my lady at her toilet, have also been found in graves symbolizing purity of heart and the light of the spirit. Bronze mirrors from later periods had long been known, but nothing had ever been found which could compare to the beauty and exquisite workmanship of these earliest mirrors.

The Huai mirrors can now be placed in two major groups. The Shouchou mirrors have nearly always the coiling dragon or an elongated bird worked into the exceedingly refined, sophisticated design, which shows considerable variations and also brings out clearly the earliest indications of the later so frequent TLV design. The Honan mirrors are generally characterized by isolated figures of animals and birds against a background very similar to the background on the Shouchou mirrors.

The problem of chronologically placing the Huai bronzes in the evolution of Chinese bronze making as a whole is, at the time of writing, in the midst of a research which no doubt within the next few years will bring results. Of this much we may be fairly certain, now, that the Huai bronzes represent a bronze maker's art quite distinct from the heavier ceremonial bronzes associated with the Chou period. It is not improbable that the two types were produced at the same time, earlier than now supposed, in geographically separated regions.

The Huai River Valley bronze makers were certainly in their technique of casting, and in the actual mixing of the bronze alloy, head and shoulders above their contemporaries in the rest of China. Early stories from the ancient books relate about the marvelously "magic swords" of Ch'u. The bronze weapons found in this region are remarkable for their sharp lines and the smoothness of the bronze, their beauty enhanced by the exquisite patina. Compared to the heavy unimaginative weapons

THE EMPIRE BUILDER

found in the north they stand distinctly in a class by themselves. There is furthermore the possibility that such skillful metal workers might have discovered a new metal more related to modern steel, which may account for their "magic swords." Iron was known in China at this time. The discoveries in this field have just begun; there are undoubtedly many new developments ahead.

The spiral motive and interwoven band design on the Huai bronzes have been found to be very suggestive of the designs on some bronze buckles from Gottland near Sweden from a somewhat later period and also of the much later woodcarving on the viking ships from Norway. Although all the designs on the Chinese bronzes are reminiscent of designs found in other parts of the world, the Huai designs, more than any others, bring the implication that we have here an art which, somehow, is related to the world outside the Chinese borders. Considering the mixed origin of the Ch'u people this would not seem an altogether fantastic supposition.

V

IMPERIAL EXPANSION

OUT of the disintegrating Chou states and the short-lived revolutionary Ch'in period there arose the mighty Han Dynasty which for nearly four hundred years spread China's fame far and wide. Contemporary with the Roman Empire, the Han Dynasty had also some of its characteristics. The greatness of the Han period came, as did that of Rome, through military successes and commercial expansion rather than cultural pursuits. The prosperity of the period is described by Hu Shih in the following translation from Chinese sources: "Millions of copper coins accumulated in the imperial treasury were kept lying idle so long that the strings tying them together rotted away. The grain in the imperial granaries was literally overflowing and had to be stored uncovered, with the result that the grain became rotten and uneatable. The peasants became wealthy and owned horses. Those who rode on mares or young colts were laughed at in respectable society. Gatekeepers lived on fine food and meat."

The auspicious beginning of this prosperous period came during the long reign of the Emperor Wu (140-87 B.C.). Two years after ascending the throne he sent General Chang Ch'ien, with a retinue of a hundred men, as his envoy to the West to negotiate an alliance with the Yüe-chis against the Hsiung-nus, the most formidable barbarian tribe who, from the earliest time, gave China trouble. It seems fairly certain that the Hsiung-nus were related to Attila's Huns and also to a Turkish people living in Central Asia in the first millennium of the Christian era who are considered to be the ancestors of the Turks who later came to Europe. A Chinese historian writing in the first century B.C. describes them as a people who, owning immense flocks of horses and cattle, lived a nomadic life in Southern Mongolia, in the Ordos region and in what is now

IMPERIAL EXPANSION

Northern China. Although they had no written language and only a simple religion based on nature worship, they seemed nevertheless to have been strongly organized politically and to have reached a considerably advanced stage materially.

Politically, Chang Ch'ien's mission was not a success. He was captured with his men by the Hsiung-nus and kept a prisoner for ten years. He finally escaped and reached the Yüe-chi tribe who were not, at that time, interested in a Chinese alliance. After visiting Ferghana and other countries in the western part of Asia, Chang Ch'ien was again captured by the Hsiung-nus. As he had married one of their daughters during his previous stay it is not impossible that his return was voluntary. He did not, at any rate, stay long this time and when he left took with him his wife and children. After further adventures he finally returned to China with an amazing report and also several new products such as the grape vine and alfalfa. His impressions of the lands in the West were written down and remain to this day the most important document in China's earliest relations with the West.

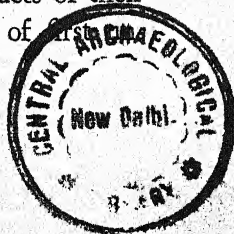
Chang Ch'ien's accounts of the brilliant courts, where he had been entertained during his travels, fired the imagination of the ambitious Wu Ti and new expeditions followed his return. These expeditions were probably not first thought of as military campaigns of conquest, but were sent more as a means to spread abroad the glory of the court of Han, and to open up new avenues for commercial expansion. But when Ferghana showed unwillingness to send to China the horses which the Chinese emperor demanded in exchange for Chinese luxuries, and when the nomad tribes along the way, China's perennial enemy, made it difficult for the embassies to proceed westward, the emperor found himself involved in military campaigns which, successfully carried through, ushered in an era of imperial expansion up to that time unprecedented in Chinese history. The Chinese borders were extended far out into the desert, where military garrisons were established to protect the caravan trains with their precious loads of silk for the Roman Empire, where China during the Han Dynasty became known as "the land of Seres," the land of silk.

IMPERIAL EXPANSION

The invention of silk has been attributed to the wife of the mythological Emperor Huang Ti in the third millennium B.C., which simply means that silk weaving was known in China at a very early time. The manufacture of silk was kept by the Chinese a carefully guarded secret until two Nestorian priests, in the sixth century A.D., brought the astonishing news to the Emperor Justinian that silk was not produced from a vegetable matter combed from trees, but from the cocoons of the silkworm. The priests succeeded, so the story goes, in smuggling eggs of the silkworm, hidden in bamboo canes, out of the country, and so the secret of silk weaving escaped from China.

It was the silk trade which, during the centuries just before and after the Christian era, made the plains of Central Asia criss-cross with caravan routes carrying goods in all directions. The lonely towns in the desert oasis became busy marts where men of many nations met and exchanged not only goods, but also ideas. The Chinese themselves, however, did not carry their goods all the way to Rome. Some of the countries of the Near East, Parthia especially, became the middlemen which carried the goods to Rome and its colonies. While China and the countries which acted as middlemen grew prosperous and mighty from the silk trade, Rome declined, under an extravagance of oriental luxuries which is deplored in the writings of the Roman moralists of that day.

Hudson in his book, *Europe and China*, says: "There is no evidence that there was ever in the Roman world a taste for Chinese patterned silk. Silk appears to have reached the Roman frontiers in various forms, but always to have undergone subsequently some finishing process." The most usual of such processes was of a rather curious kind. We learn from ancient sources, both classical and Chinese, that the main demand of Roman fashion was for semi-transparent silk gauzes and that, in order to make these, close-textured Chinese silks were split and rewoven. Ma Tuan-lin says that the people of Ta Ts'in (Rome) bought Chinese *chien-su* (close-textured plain silk stuffs) and unravelled them to make *ling* (light-textured fabrics), and this is confirmed by Pliny who declares that "the Seres send to Rome the fleecy products of their forests and thus furnish our women with the double task of



IMPERIAL EXPANSION

ravelling and then reweaving the threads . . . all that a Roman lady may exhibit her charms in transparent gauze." These transparent gauzes, curiously enough, later came back to the Chinese, who at first failed to recognize their own product. It evidently later became an indigenous industry, as gauzy materials are, to this day, a favorite material with the Chinese.

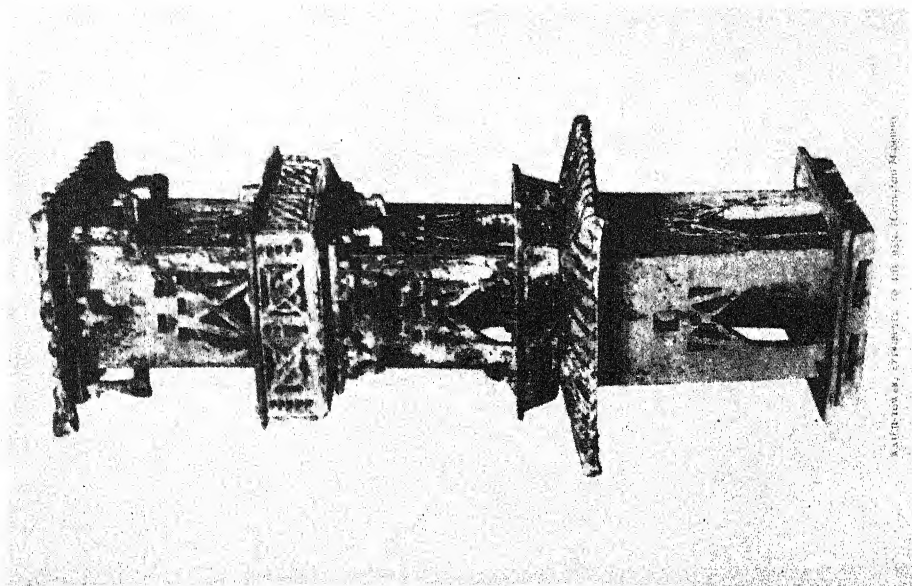
Excavations in Central Asia, however, have brought to light many fragments of patterned silk which prove that even if the Roman beauties did not appreciate Chinese designs the people on the way to Rome did. These fragments show that Chinese designing about the beginning of our era was a fully developed and even sophisticated art. Both the texture and the designs show also an art which has been singularly maintained down through the centuries.

Quilts covering the coffins in tombs excavated near Uрга in Mongolia by Colonel Kozloff from shortly before the Christian era show also exquisite embroidery. While the design here is inspired by the nomadic Animal Style Art, the material and workmanship are unmistakably Chinese. Even to this remote barbarian place in the North, Chinese textiles and embroidery had found their way before the Christian era.

If the West then received silk and other luxuries from China, China received in return from the Roman Empire several new imports and chief among these was glass.

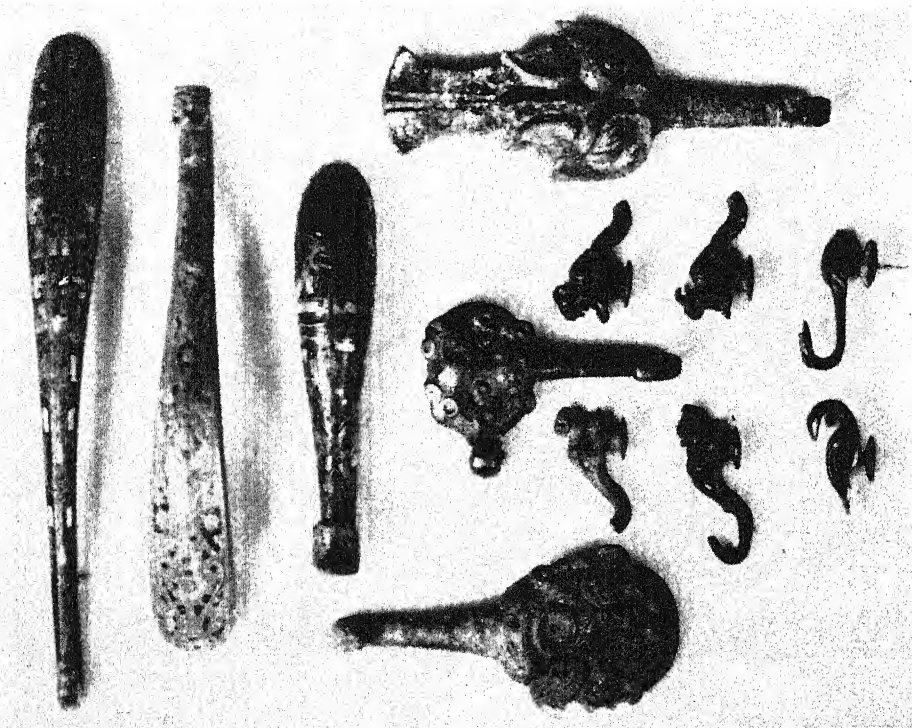
Glass manufacture was not a new invention to the Chinese people when Roman glass appeared during the Han Dynasty, as excavations at Anyang have brought to light objects made of glass from the twelfth century B.C. How to account for the rarity of earlier pieces is an unsolved problem. Possibly the art was lost. For centuries imported glass remained a great luxury to the Chinese until in the fifth century A.D. it became a native industry.

There are no records which indicate that there was any exchange of art objects between the East and the West at this time, except that among the articles exported to China from the Roman Empire, Hudson mentions "above all imitation jewelry and ornaments of colored glass." So far as I know only fragments of these Roman exports have been pre-



WATCHTOWER, 1ST CENTURY, OF THE 1ST, HAN DYNASTY

POTTERY WATCH TOWER. *Han Dynasty.*
Cernuchi Museum, Paris



BUCKLES OF BRONZE, WITH INLAID DESIGNS OF GOLD, SILVER
AND JADE. *Han Dynasty*
Author's Collection

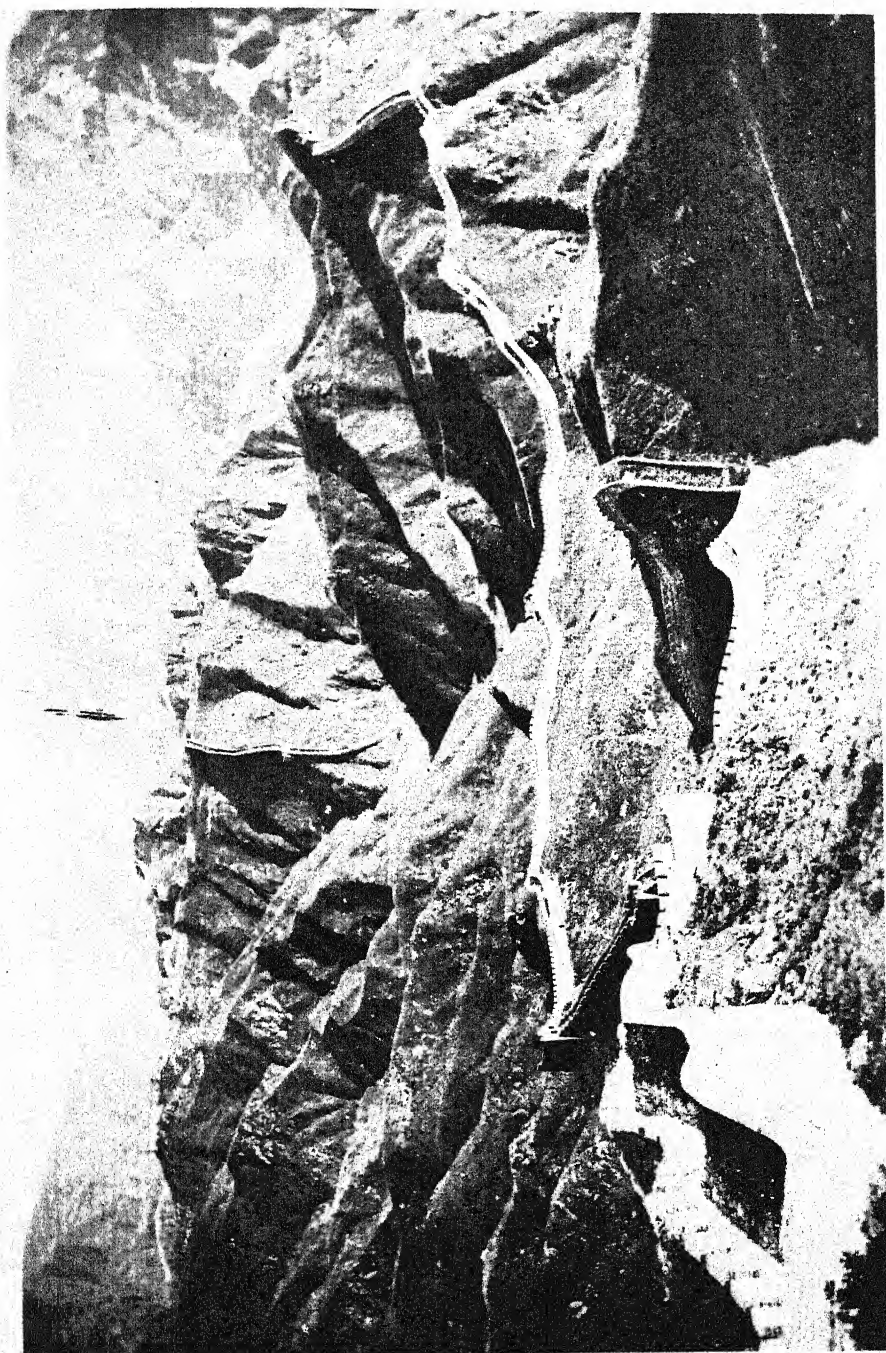
IMPERIAL EXPANSION

served, but there is a large group of Chinese belt-hooks and buckles extant, used as ornaments on clothing and swords, which shows that personal decorative objects were extensively worn during the Han Dynasty. The designs on these belt-hooks and buckles, which must primarily have been made for the living, although they have often been found in the graves, range from the most naturalistic animal forms executed in the bronze itself to highly conventionalized geometric designs inlaid in silver, gold and semi-precious stones.

This inlaid art was a form of ornamentation which evidently also appealed to the nomads, as it has been found along the trail of the Eurasian Animal Style Art, used to a large extent on similar objects. We may find, as research goes on, that we have here another international art which was carried by the nomads to many lands. The gaudy metal art of the Goths in Europe in the early centuries of our era has certainly much in common with the workmanship and designs on these belt-hooks and buckles from China and Siberia. However that may be, the Chinese obviously made this inlaid art their own at a very early date as it has been found on Anyang bronzes and bone ornaments from the twelfth century B.C. During the Han Dynasty it is used to great perfection in the designs on the ceremonial bronzes.

Except for the textiles, the belt-hooks and a few bronzes, all the art that has been preserved from the Han Dynasty has been found in or around the graves and will be described in the next chapter. It is reasonable, however, to believe that a period which furnished its graves with such an abundance of art objects and which, according to the writings of the day, placed such emphasis on the good things of this life should also have expressed itself in buildings and in decorative objects for the living, but China, alas, has no Parthenon nor any pyramids which can tell about her past glory. Always depending on the perishable materials of bricks and wood, no early buildings have been preserved in China.

Miniature models of glazed and unglazed clay buildings from the Han period have been found in the graves, and houses were also carved on funerary stones which have been preserved from this period. The architecture of these early grave models and the houses pictured on the



THE CHINESE WALL
Begun in the 3rd century B.C. by Ch'in Shih Huang-ti

IMPERIAL EXPANSION

sculptured stones represent the essential features of later Chinese architecture except the upturned roof corners which were probably introduced to Chinese architecture when Buddhism came to China from India.

A more complete picture of early Chinese architecture must be reconstructed from the written records which give picturesque accounts of early buildings. But in such a reconstruction allowance must be made for a poet's fancy and a writer's enthusiasm and the changing standards between an earlier and a later age.

One of the most discussed references to early architecture in historical records is the "Ming T'ang" or Hall of Brightness. China's authority on architecture, Chu Chi-chi'en, tells us that scholars have now arrived at the conclusion that it was "a set of buildings arranged in the shape of a Greek cross, with a round concave roof over the center space which was used as audience hall," a type of architecture different from any forms extant either in pictures or buildings.

One of the early odes gives a vivid picture of the founder of the Chou Dynasty planning a city in his newly conquered territory. In later Chinese architecture city planning plays a conspicuous part and this earliest description of city planning shows the tenacity of Chinese customs in its points of resemblance to the capital of Peking which the Ming emperor Yung Lo planned twenty-five hundred years later.

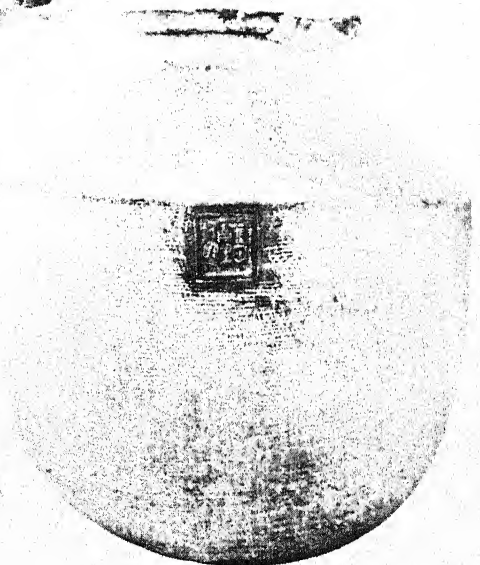
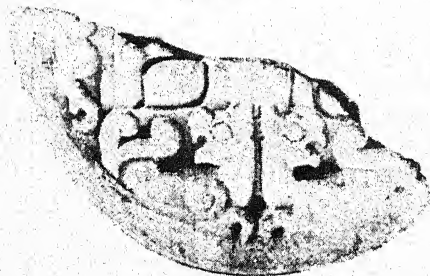
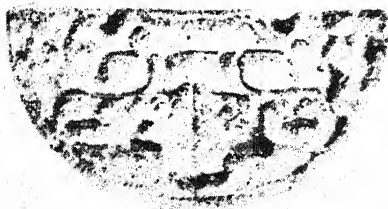
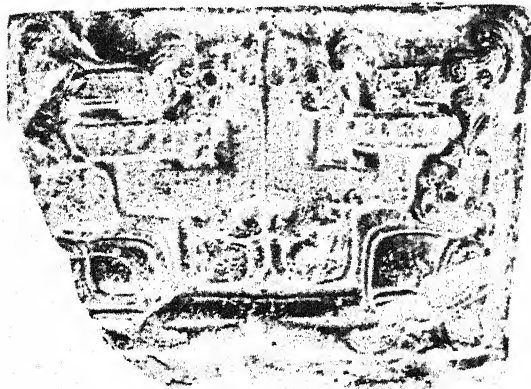
Descriptions of the palaces and walls built by Ch'in Shih Huang-ti in his capital in Shensi give the picture of a city of magnificent buildings, but all of this perished long ago. The only architectural monument left from the pre-Christian era is the Great Wall, commenced by this emperor in the third century B.C. as a defense against the nomad invaders. If not in technical skill, certainly in extent and in the magnitude of its conception, this wall, conservatively estimated to be fifteen hundred miles long, is without comparison the greatest building enterprise in the ancient world.

The capitals of the Han Dynasty, first at Ch'angan in the present province of Shensi, and later at Loyang in Honan, were from all accounts great cities with many palaces, but all of these have also perished. A brother of the Emperor Wu in the second century B.C. is said to have

IMPERIAL EXPANSION

been a passionate lover of architecture. He built himself a palace in Shantung which escaped the destruction of the palaces at Ch'angan during Wang Mang's uprising. This palace was seen, something like three hundred years later, by a young boy who later became the Chinese poet, Wang Yen-shou. He wrote a poem about it which has been splendidly translated by Arthur Waley in *The Temple* collection of Chinese poems. "Birds of the air, beasts of the earth," says the poet, "sprout from the timbers; . . . The red bird from the south soars skyward from his niche; the serpent ring on ring enfolds the beam. The white deer all alone cranes from his pillar; the squat griffin on his corbel curled shoulders the lintels, while the knowing hare lies cozy at the girder's side."

And not only were the beams, the lintels and the corbels decorated with a sculpture which in the poet's description suggests the sculpture extant from this period, but on the walls "all heaven and earth is painted. All living things after their tribes, and all wild marrying of sort with sort; strange spirits of the sea, gods of the hills, to all their thousand guises had the painter formed his reds and blues and all the wonders of life had he shaped truthfully and colored after their kind." A wonderful word picture which makes one regret, more than ever, that so very little of this early art has been preserved.



CHOU DYNASTY POTTERY

Chou Chao-Hsiang Collection

Bull. No. 1, Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm

VI

THE GRAVES OF THE SONS OF HAN

WE HAVE every reason to believe that some of the best art of this early period was reserved for the grave and the altar. That the cult of the dead gave importance and dignity to the art which was used in its service is shown in a comparison of the ceramics of the Chou and Han periods. During the Chou Dynasty when bronzes were used more generally in the death cult, pottery making shows a marked deterioration. The few Chou potteries which have been preserved are crude and, except for a few carved and moulded designs, have nothing but primitive mat and string impressions, potteries inferior to those made two thousand years earlier.

During the Han Dynasty, on the other hand, when the Confucian ritual became eclipsed by Taoism, we find the bronzes deteriorating and becoming secularized, while pottery making takes on a new significance. Hunting scenes are painted on the unglazed jars while an elaborate design in relief, also usually hunting scenes, are seen on the glazed jars which now appear.

The Han Dynasty graves, excavated from the hard loess soil of the North, which have brought forth a wealth of material, were usually lined with decorated tiles or stone slabs; and pottery jars, lacquer bowls and bronze objects of various descriptions have been found in positions which would lead one to think that they had been surrounding the corpse, although few skeletal remains have been found.

The art of the world everywhere shows that the thoughts of early man were deeply concerned with the hereafter. Where do we come from, where do we go from here, and can this good thing we call life continue after the body has ceased to function, were questions which

THE GRAVES OF THE SONS OF HAN

came to the stone-age people as well as to the people of the Han Dynasty three thousand years later.

The Chinese believed that every human being has a "*shen*," a god of his own, so to speak. "Therefore," says DeGroot in his *History of Chinese Religion*, "each member of the human race is a god and each god may become a man by descending into a human body. A man may be a powerful god if the '*shen*' or soul which dwells in him is powerful, is in a flourishing state, if the Yang substance composing his soul is abundant. Such a man may even be able to exercise power over the gods and bend them to his will."

To assist this divine power in the departed spirit, the grave was furnished with objects which were decorated according to a symbolism thought actually to have magic power. It was the expression of a simple faith which still needed the objective and the concrete in the spirit's never-ending search for immortality.

On the pottery jars and vases found in the Han Dynasty graves the earliest known glazing in China appears. Whether the Chinese invented the art of glazing themselves or if it came into China from the West during this time of imperial expansion is still an unsettled question. So far the general belief is that China received the idea of glazing from the West, but while archæology is the unexplored field it still is in China, the question can probably afford to wait yet a while before it is settled. One can never tell what surprises the archæologist may be turning up.

The barbarians, with their short legs, stocky build, coarse features and the characteristic dress of the nomads, are often pictured in the hunting scenes on these Han Dynasty vases and hill jars, so-called because of the cover which is cone-shaped, representing hills with hunters and wild animals in pursuit and ambush.

During a visit to the Suiyuan territory on the Mongolian border I became aware of a resemblance in the mountain formations toward the north to the crags pictured on these hill jars. This, perhaps fantastic, impression was strengthened when I was told that, even to this day, the Chinese, who live in this wild country, leave their homes in the villages for the walled towns when winter comes to escape the mountain ma-



PAINTED POTTERY. *Han Dynasty*
Metropolitan Museum, New York

THE GRAVES OF THE SONS OF HAN

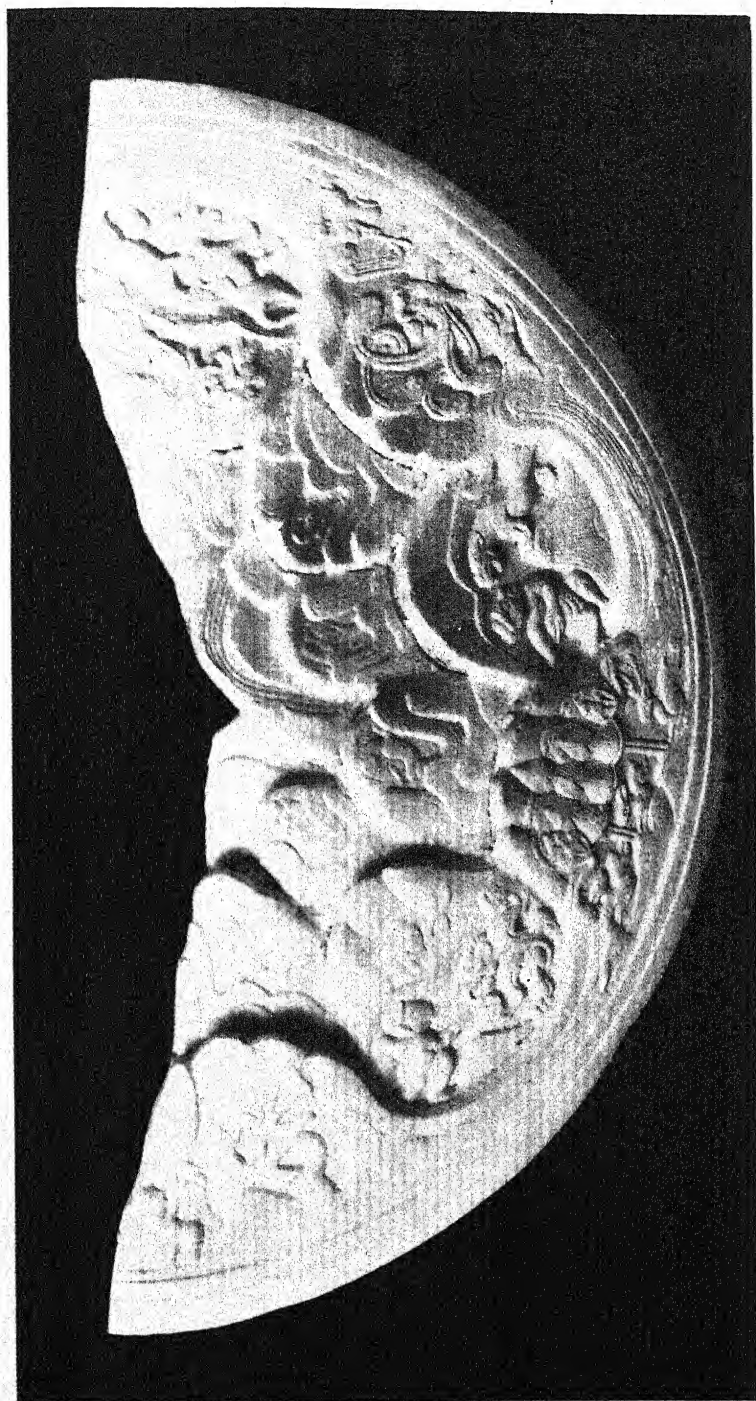
raiders from the North who swoop down to rob the settled farms when food is scarce. The scenes pictured on these hill jars and vases suggest such a country.

The Chinese believed that these nomad peoples had occult powers and understood the language of birds and beasts. In the ancient *Book of Rites* it is told about their skill in the training and taming of wild animals. With animal forms the most prominent medium in this magic art of the grave, it is natural that such a people should also be pictured.

The straw figures, which Confucius says the people of the Chou Dynasty put in their graves to take the place of living sacrifices, were during the Han Dynasty made of clay. These objects and figures from the Han Dynasty seem to be largely preoccupied with material well-being. We find houses, stoves, kitchen utensils, camels, carts and oxen. The animals and also houses and other objects are well sculptured and moulded, but the human figures from this early period are more often crude and sometimes grotesque.

Crude sculpture of animal forms found near Han graves have led to the belief that Chinese sculpture of a later period received its main inspiration from Buddhism, but this view can no longer be easily defended. While Buddhism undeniably influenced Chinese sculpture profoundly, new finds executed in bronze and iron from before the time Buddhism entered China show very advanced sculpture. The two bronze bears in the Gardner Museum in Boston, two similar bears in European collections and two tigers in the Loo and Hellström collections are fine examples of the Han sculpture so vividly described in Wang Yen-shou's poem quoted in part in the last chapter. These objects with a few sculptured stones in relief give an inkling of the real sculpture of this period. The probability is that the crude animals found near Han graves were made by ordinary artisans and not by real artists.

More important by far than any of these scattered finds are the carved funerary stones from Shantung, excavated in the seventeenth century but which only within the last half century have come to the knowledge of the West in the great work of Edouard Chavannes. S. W. Bushell, who first brought news of these stones to Europe, has also a fine account



MOULD FOR HILL JARS
Field Museum, Chicago

THE GRAVES OF THE SONS OF HAN

of them in his book, *Chinese Art*, which I have used to a certain extent in the following description.

The earlier series consists of eight stone slabs found on a hill near the city of Feicheng in the province of Shantung. The artists who carved these large stone slabs, which lined the walls in the subterranean chambers, knew how to draw. Most of the stones show an almost flat surface with the pictures carved or incised sometimes in the merest outline. This is particularly true about the earlier series. The later series, which were found in a cemetery belonging to the Wu family, who claimed descent from a Shang Dynasty ruler more than a thousand years earlier, show a slight relief.

The legendary material, which has constituted Chinese history back of 1000 B.C., has been graphically depicted on these stones. Fu Hsi, who is supposed to have instituted marriage, is represented as the first of the *San-huang* or 'Three August Ones.' He holds a mason's square and is accompanied by a female figure wearing a coronet who holds a pair of compasses in her hand. She is sometimes represented as Fu Hsi's sister and sometimes as his consort. Their bodies, which are intertwined below, terminate in the form of a dragon.

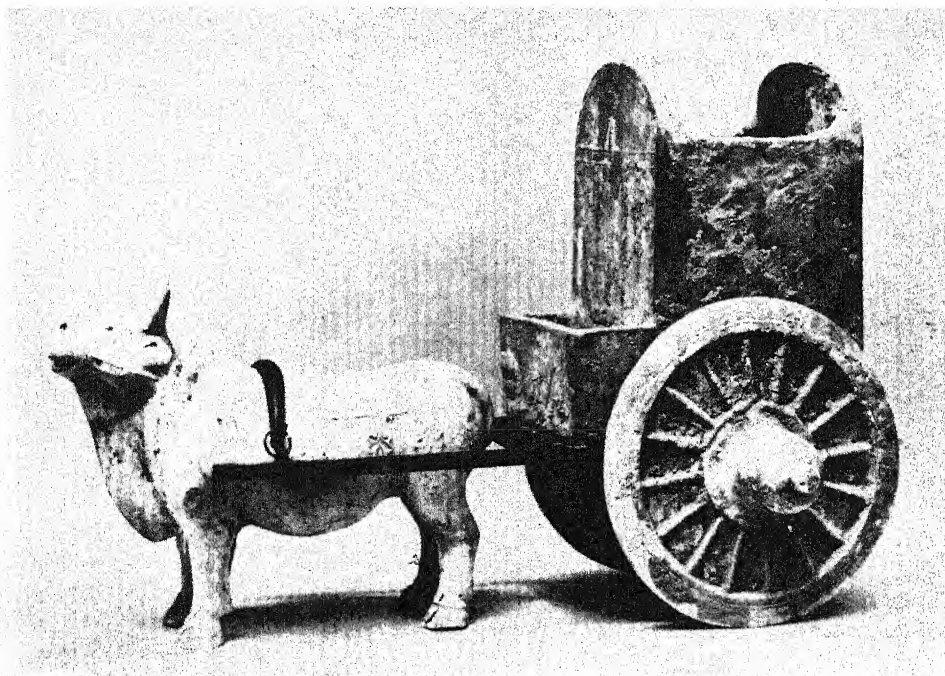
The inscription reads: "Fu Hsi styled Ts'ang Ching was the first to rule as king; he traced the trigrams and knotted cords as means of governing all within the seas." "The trigrams" refer to the ancient symbols of divination, the *Pa Kua*, which underlies all of China's earliest philosophy. These are supposed to have been revealed to Fu Hsi.

Next to Fu Hsi is Shên Nung. The inscription tells how he brought agriculture and husbandry to his people and reads: "Shên Nung, seeing the value of agriculture, taught how to till the ground and sow grain, and stirred up myriads of the people."

The sun and moon with their mythological attributes within bands of constellations, the stars connected by lines in Chinese fashion, are represented on another stone. The moon is inhabited by the toad and the hare. According to Taoist legends Ch'ang-O, the wife of the "Archer Lord" at the time of the Emperor Yao, stole the drug of immortality and fled with it to the moon. There she was transformed into a three-



GRAVE OBJECTS. *Han Dynasty*
Sirèn, History of Early Chinese Art



TERRACOTTA GRAVE OBJECT. *Han Dynasty*
Metropolitan Museum, New York

THE GRAVES OF THE SONS OF HAN

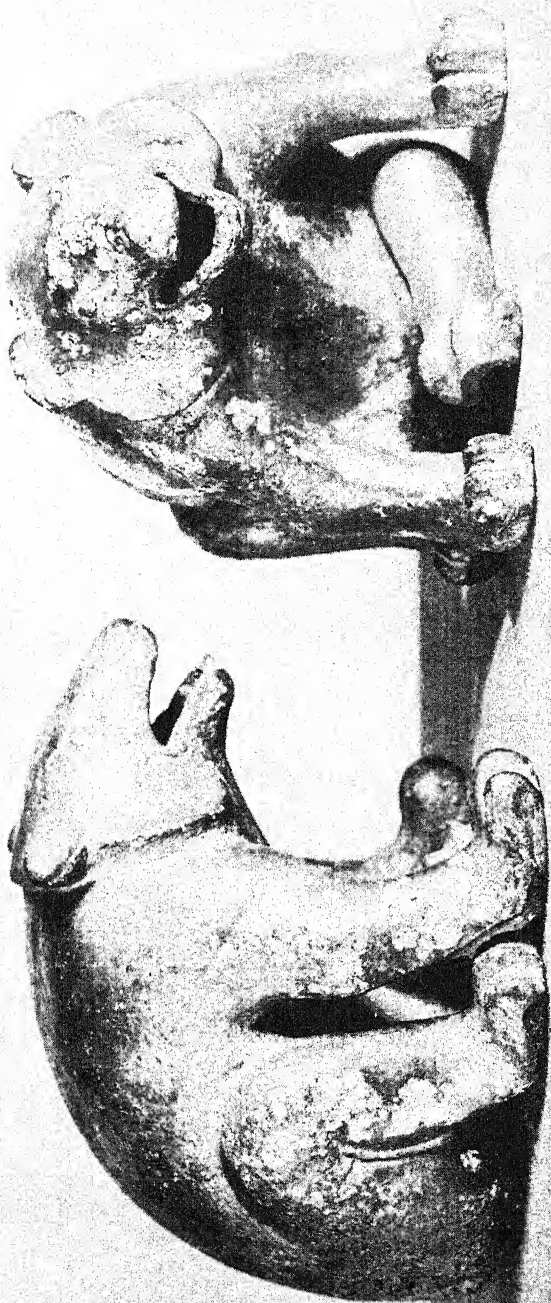
legged toad, a constantly recurring figure in Chinese art. The hare, according to a later Buddhist story, offered his body as a willing sacrifice, lying upon a pile of dry grass, and was rewarded for his devotion by transmigration to the moon. In another scene the hare is busy pounding herbs with pestle and mortar. Taoist medicine men must always gather in the mountain herbs to compound their immortality drugs by the light of the moon.

Besides these scenes from earliest Chinese folklore and astronomy, one finds a long range of various subjects depicted on these priceless stones. Tartar bowmen, clad in furs and pointed caps, are seen pursuing wild animals as well as conventionalized monsters. There are tribute-bearing processions recalling descriptions in the ancient *Bamboo Books*. The dragon is seen pursuing a somewhat indistinct rat while the phoenixes are being fed by a monkey on the roof of a two-storied house, singularly true to the type of architecture used at a much later time.

The rescue of one of the nine sacred tripods is the subject of one of the most important stones. These ancient vessels, which to the Chinese had some of the significance of the Rheingold in the *Nibelungenlied*, were lost in the Ssü River in 333 B.C. It was reported that they had been seen there and the Emperor sent an expedition to recover them. After much labor, one was finally fished out of the river, when a dragon appeared and bit the rope in two so that it fell back into the river and was never seen again.

Large tiles were also used to line the tombs. Except for a few painted ones recently recovered, which will be described presently, these tiles, which usually have a conventionalized border in slight relief, carry nearly always stamped impressions of animal forms, sometimes with a rider and carriage. All of these tiles except a very few in an elaborate openwork pattern show the hand of the artisan rather than the artist.

Recently I have seen rubbings of some large tiles from Honan, which give representations of human forms and animals in motion, done to great perfection. The drawing revealed in these stamped impressions is singularly suggestive of modern art in its impressionistic quality. In a few lines the artist has succeeded in giving the flight of the bird, the



GILT BRONZE BEARS. *Han Dynasty or earlier*
PHOTO: ISABELLA GARDNER MUSEUM, BOSTON

THE GRAVES OF THE SONS OF HAN

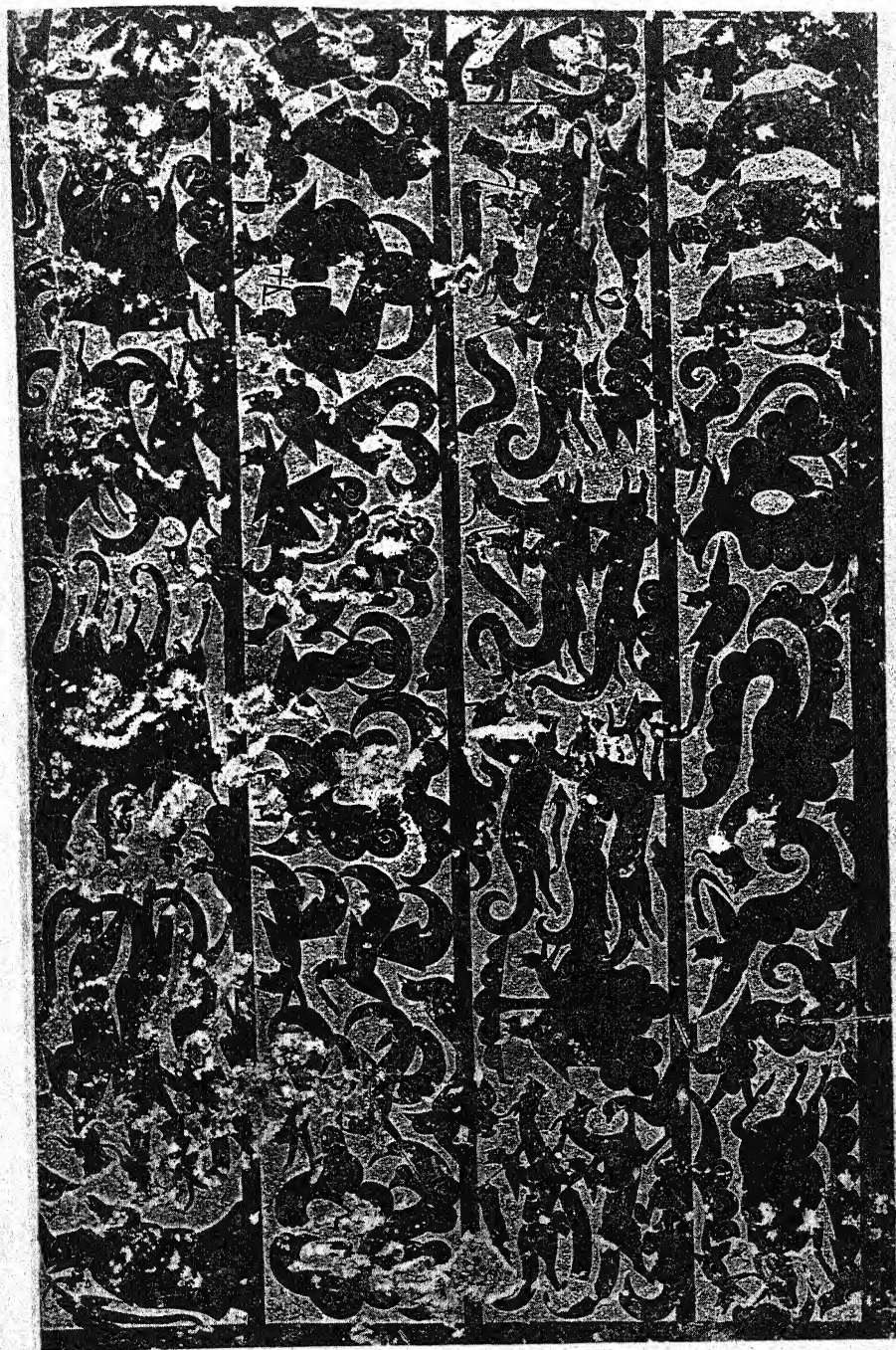
gallop of the horse, the graceful leap of the deer and the trailing dog in a movement so swift and vivid that it seems as though the animals themselves had been transported into the plastic clay.

Apart from literary sources the first intimation of early paintings had been found on terracotta grave urns on which hunting scenes were represented. Early textiles from Turkestan and Mongolian excavations had also shown well-developed designs. These scraps of evidence, together with the drawing indicated on the Shantung stones, gave an inkling of the standards of the pictorial art of the Han Dynasty, but this fragmentary evidence of an early advanced pictorial art has been vastly increased by several large painted tiles from Han graves, which more recently have found their way into European and American collections.

These new discoveries show that Chinese painting in the second century B.C. was a more developed art than one had dared to believe. Otto Fisher in his book on Han painting says that all the possibilities which decided the future development of Chinese painting, the rational as well as the fantastic elements from the traditional and magical world of old, are reflected in it. The Chinese world conception with its fertile dualism, the static Confucianism and the fluctuating, imaginative Taoism, had already at that early time found its permanent form. The exceedingly light touch, great reserve and impressionistic suggestive characteristics of later painting are here already developed to great perfection.

While more than half of the figures show the slender outlines and graceful movements of the cultured Chinese in their flowing robes, other figures show the short, stocky build of the bearded barbarian from the North. In processions of wagons and animals he follows as the attendant, clad in the usual short tunic and leggings, carrying banners and tri-cornered wimples, which, incidentally, were found in great abundance in the Mongolian graves excavated by Colonel Kozloff.

There is abundant evidence to show that magical beliefs inspired most of the work. Red is the prevailing color. Either the ground is completely covered with red and the figures drawn in black and white outline, or a heavy red painted border surrounds the picture. The early magical beliefs of the stone-age people expressed in the designs on their funerary



STONE BAS-RELIEF, SHANTUNG. Han Dynasty
Chauannes. "Mission," Archæologique

THE GRAVES OF THE SONS OF HAN

urns are still alive in these sophisticated artists three thousand years later and the animal symbolism on the bronzes is repeated in intricate conventionalized forms. Again we find ourselves in a fantastic world of magic and soul-stirring symbolism.

Life's mystery, its beginning and end, birth and death, seems to have been the main inspiration of Chinese artists for millenniums before the Christian era. The need of the living soul reaching upward from the grave to the beauty of the world around, struggling to be liberated from the compulsions and fears of the unknown, was not, so far as we know, expressed in Chinese art until Buddhism came with its dynamic touch of personality. With the Bodhisatva, the compassionate saviours in human form, able to understand the need of the living, there was ushered in a new era in Chinese art.

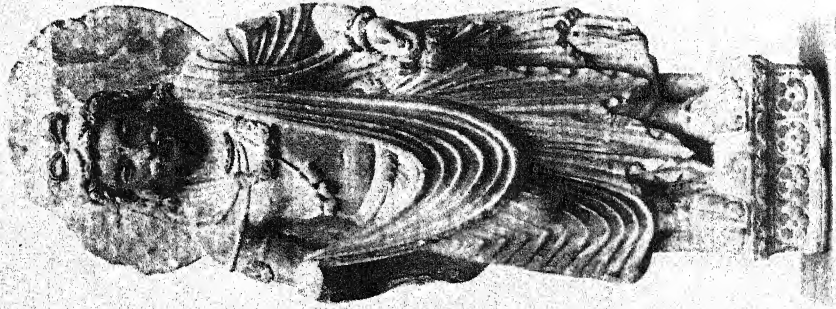


CHINESE PAINTING ON GRAVE TILE. *Han Dynasty*
PHOTO: BOSTON MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

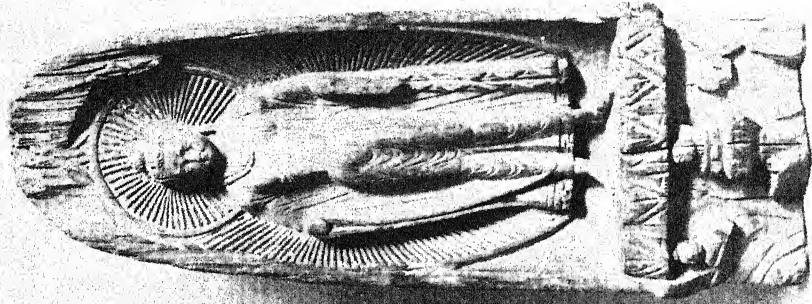
PART TWO

THE AGE OF FAITH AND SPLENDOR

TEMPLES AND PALACES



BODDHISATVA MAITREYA. GHANDARA
TYPE. STONE. (1st or 2nd century A.D.)
Metropolitan Museum, New York



BUDDHA. WOOD. GHANDARA TYPE
(T'ang Dynasty)
From Chinese Turkestan
Metropolitan Museum, New York



BODDHISATVA. GHANDARA TYPE. STONE
(1st or 2nd century A.D.)
Metropolitan Museum, New York

VII

THE COMING OF BUDDHISM

CHINESE commerce and inventions, especially the silk trade and the invention of paper, played a great part in the development of the West, just before and after the beginning of our era, but China was also at this time exposed to many new influences from without which were destined to play an important rôle in her artistic and religious development and the greatest and most far-reaching of these was the coming of Buddhism. The ancient ritual on the altar and the traditional customs of the grave were not given up, but new inspiration came from Buddhism which brought in the present comforts and consolations of the compassionate mediation and help of the Boddhisatvas and the forward-looking hope of a paradise for the blessed.

The story of the conquests of Alexander the Great in Syria, Babylonia and Persia is well known. The far-reaching effect of his advance farther east is a chapter in the history of the world which, up to quite recently, has received less attention. His conquests in Bactria and Ferghana and in North India were epoch-making in the cultural history and especially in the art history of Asia. What carried this influence of Hellenistic art across Asia was religion. Just as it was Hellenistic forms in Christian dress that penetrated Europe, so it was Hellenistic forms in Buddhist dress that penetrated Asia. And right here we must say that the impulse from Greece became even more attenuated under Buddhist guise than under that of Christianity.

Buddhism had been founded some two hundred years before Alexander. But it did not penetrate into northwestern India, the Greek sphere, until Asoka's reign a century or so after Alexander's death. It was here that Buddhism and Hellenism first met. It was here that Buddhism received from Hellenism the inspiration which through centuries to

THE COMING OF BUDDHISM

come made Buddhist art find its chief artistic expression in the human body. Although Buddhism had not shown the absolute prejudice against all forms of images that characterized the Hebrew spirit, Buddha himself is not prominent in early sculpture. There are representations of the nativity but no babe. There are representations of Buddha riding forth from his royal domain but it is a riderless horse that goes forth. It is only when Buddhism touches the Greek domain that it becomes natural and inevitable for the divine always to be represented in the human form.

Gradually in northwestern India the Buddha form takes on its permanent conventional representations and a new type known as Ghandara art is created. From here Buddhist art with the Hellenistic type more and more attenuated spread back over the rest of India and Ceylon and north and west to China and Japan, during just the same centuries that Christianity with its Hellenistic influence was spreading across Europe.

One of the greatest factors in the carrying of Buddhism to Central Asia was the Indo-Scythian Empire in northwest India. The Indo-Scythians, or Yüe-chis as they are called in the Chinese annals, are first known in Chinese history as a people living in the northwest corner of China in the territory of the present province of Kansu. In the second century B.C., while still living on the Chinese border, the Yüe-chis were defeated by the Hsiung-nus whose chieftain made a drinking cup of the skull of the Yüe-chi king. Terrified by such barbarism, two hundred thousand Yüe-chi warriors, with their women and children, left Kansu and migrated westward, one of the greatest migrations in the ancient world which has remained singularly unrecognized in the history of the West. Increasing like a snowball as they went, they overwhelmed the Greek states of Central Asia, bringing restlessness and change to the countries with whom they came in contact. Though starting as rude barbarians, they absorbed gradually both the remnants of Greek culture and the Buddhist religion which they found in the regions conquered, and finally, after many years' wanderings, reached northwestern India where they settled and founded the Indo-Scythian Empire.

Excavations during this century in Central Asia have brought to light

THE COMING OF BUDDHISM

manuscripts in the language of this people, and a study of these documents has brought out the startling revelation that we have here the language of an Indo-European people. How and when this tribe, related to the European stock, came to live on the borders of China, is a puzzle left for future historians to solve.

The position of the Indo-Scythians as a link between the East and the West is indicated by the fact that their history is related more or less fully in the annals of China, while their coinage which has come down to us has its inscription in Greek and Sanskrit. Some of these coins have representations of Greek divinities, others of Egyptian, Babylonian, Persian and Indian divinities. One even has been found with the Indo-Scythian king on one side and Augustus Cæsar, where the god usually stands, on the other. Another has an image which looks like Apollo Belvedere—carefully labelled in Greek, B O D D O.

As time went on the Indo-Scythian Empire in India became altogether Buddhist, and Kanishka, their greatest king, became the great missionary apostle of Buddhism. That the hordes of the Huns, who had come as a wave of destruction into the old civilizations of the world and whose own art remained an Animal Style Art, should, by their very cruelty and inhumanity, cause a chain of events which ultimately brought new life and beauty to the art of China in the coming of Buddhism and in its glorifications of the human body as the dwelling place of the divine, is surely one of the most remarkable cycles of cause and effect in the history of the human race.

The ambitious venture of the Han emperor Wu into Central Asia, which began as a punitive expedition against the Hsiung-nus, developed later into a foreign policy which had a dominating commercial incentive. China up to that time had been living in a cultural insularity which took for granted that the world outside the Middle Kingdom was populated by barbarians. The report of Chang Ch'ien, and the expeditions which followed his return, of countries in the West with a culture comparable to that of China, opened up a new world to the Chinese. The states on the borders of the Tarim Basin, Lou-lan, Turfan, Kucha and even far-off Ferghana, became now the objectives for China's imperial



TI TSANG BODDHISATVA

"Merciful Helper of the Dead"

From Caves of the Thousand Buddhas, Tunhuang

THE COMING OF BUDDHISM

ambition. Military expeditions of considerable magnitude were sent along the caravan routes to make the states along the way willing to accept the protectorates which China wished to establish in Central Asia. The ancient towns in the oases where the Chinese merchants, diplomats and soldiers came on these expeditions, were international centers where men of many nations met and exchanged not only goods but also ideas, for it was into these polyglot communities that Buddhist missionaries came with the message of the new religion from India.

Of the progress of Buddhism across Central Asia just before and after the beginning of the Christian era, almost nothing has been known until the last thirty years. During this time a number of expeditions have excavated in the deserts of Chinese Turkestan a wealth of material that bids fair to rival that of Egypt. It is a study of the material from these excavations that enables us at last to form a picture of Buddhism's triumphant progress through, what was then, a well-populated country.

The tenacity of the art traditions of Greece is poignantly exhibited in this Buddhist art from Central Asia, made centuries after the Greeks themselves had departed or had become absorbed in the ocean of different races of Asia. Buddhist sculpture in stone and stucco from Afghanistan, brought back by French expeditions, is in many instances pure Greek and so are many of the ornamental designs on the wood and stone carvings from the houses excavated in various places.

Although the advance of Buddhism more than anything else enables us to form a picture of these communities in Central Asia, there are also other records which show that these oases in the heart of Asia in the very beginning of our era were international centers where the culture streams of the world were meeting. In the town of Niya, Sir Aurel Stein turned up an archive consisting of land purchase deeds dating from not long after the Christian era. They were written on wood in the language of northwestern India. Each consisted of several blocks of wood tied together face to face and carefully sealed. The seals contained in some cases representations of Zeus, Medusa and Eros, sometimes elephants and other Indian emblems and sometimes Chinese characters.

In a spur of the Great Wall not far from Tunhuang, Sir Aurel Stein

THE COMING OF BUDDHISM

discovered the earliest manuscript written on paper, dated 150 A.D.; and Sven Hedin, who by his painstaking, accurate topographical work and monumental geographical explorations of Central Asia prepared the way for the expeditions which followed, found also, in his excavations of the ancient city of Loulan far into the desert, paper dated 200 A.D. Paper was invented in China in 105 A.D., so we have in these finds striking illustrations of how rapidly the Chinese penetration in Central Asia was taking place during the Han Dynasty.

The mingling of the culture streams of the East, the West and the South in these oases in Central Asia is nowhere more evident than in the Turfan oasis which was explored by several German expeditions during the dozen years before the war. The material from these expeditions is arranged and opened to the public in the Berlin Ethnographical Museum, an impressive and beautiful monument to the unflinching courage, scholarship and artistic understanding of the late Albert van Le Coq who had himself, with Grünwedel and other German archæologists, excavated and brought back the material.

Turfan during the early centuries of the Christian era must have been a veritable Babel of tongues, as manuscripts in seventeen languages have been excavated. This international community is reflected in the life-sized frescoes which have been brought back entire and set up at Berlin. One sees here swarthy Indians, Turks from the desert, Chinese donors, and some most interesting red-haired men from the North.

The next point where the eastward journey of Buddhism can be seen is in the ancient oasis at Tunhuang. This place is right on the border of China proper and the Turkestan desert. It is China, yet has the desert dryness to keep its relics intact. Here in a great quantity of cave temples cut into the side of the cliff, which have become known as "The Caves of the Thousand Buddhas," have been preserved Buddhist paintings from the latter half of the first millennium A.D., painted probably by Chinese artists and artisans. But so far as I know, no finds have been made which show that China's pictorial art had crossed the borders of China during the first centuries of the Christian era. In the earliest frescoes at Turfan the Indian influence is still seen in the sensuously swayed, partly un-

THE COMING OF BUDDHISM

covered bodies. When Chinese influence later enters in, there is an almost complete absence of the nude and the Chinese love for symmetry and decorum is seen in the erect dignified postures. The donors, who often had their pictures painted in a corner, have also often at this later time Chinese features.

In 1908 a Buddhist priest told the intrepid Central Asiatic explorer Sir Aurel Stein about a sealed manuscript chamber which had been closed and buried more than a thousand years. This discovery finally drew the full attention of the world to this remarkable literary and artistic deposit from the world's past. It was found to contain some thirty thousand books in roll form, most of which are Buddhist scriptures, among them the world's earliest printed book, dated 868 A.D. It was also on the floor of one of these caves that Pelliot, who came later, found the earliest known movable type, a Chinese invention antedating by several centuries Gutenberg's invention in Europe.

After the downfall of the Han Dynasty in the third century A.D. China lost for several centuries her political hold in Central Asia, but from the art excavated it is evident that Chinese culture remained during the larger part of the first millennium of our era the dominating influence in the cosmopolitan centers of the oases along the caravan routes of Asia.

VIII

THE DARK AGES

DURING the Han Dynasty, China's civilization had been nourished by a splendid school of historical research which succeeded in restoring some of the losses caused by Shih Huang-ti's burning of the books. China's greatest historian, Ssü-ma Ch'ien, born in 145 B.C., belonging to a family of historians, produced during this period his epoch-making historical work. He was ably followed by Pan Ku and Pan Ku's brilliant sister, Pan Chao, who continued the work begun by their father who was also a historian.

So much academic activity made traditional Confucianism the most powerful influence during the latter part of the Han period and with never-failing precision the pendulum swung back from Confucian conservatism and traditionalism into political anarchy and the withdrawal of the spiritually minded into Taoistic mysticism. In art this movement is seen in a revolt against ritual and convention which may have helped to prepare the way for the coming of Buddhism.

Just when Buddhism came to China is a debated question. Traditionally, its coming has been attributed to the reign of Ming Ti, who according to a later legend is said to have had a dream about 60 A.D. of a golden saint from the West and who subsequently sent emissaries westward to search for the new teacher. Another similarly unauthenticated story tells about a Chinese pilgrim who had been converted to Buddhism among the Indo-Scythians in 2 A.D.

Although none of these stories can be corroborated by authentic literary sources, the probability is that Buddhism was known in China at the very beginning of the Christian era and even earlier. The many military, diplomatic and commercial contacts which China, during the Han Dynasty, had with Central Asia must surely have brought some infor-

THE DARK AGES

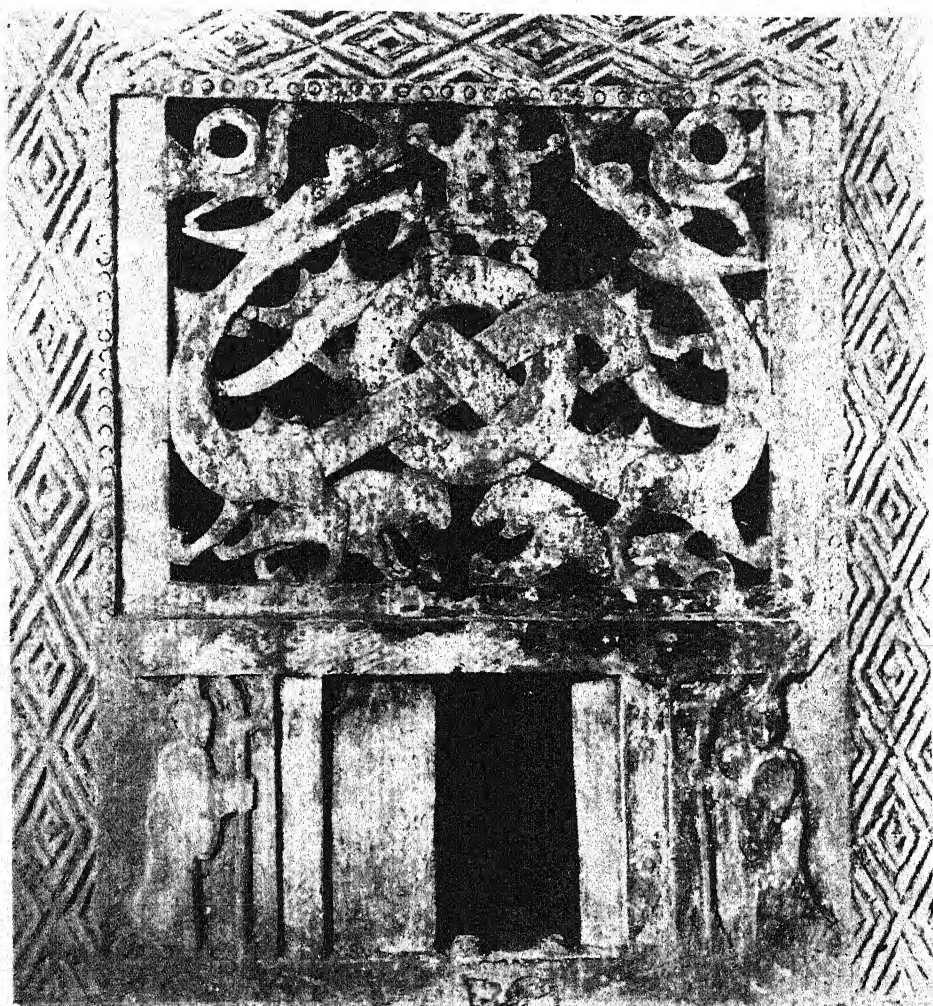
mation about the new religion which was spreading like a prairie fire over Asia.

By the middle of the second century A.D., says Karlgren, Buddhism was certainly already well established in China. The Emperor Huan (147-167) is recorded to have worshipped before Buddha in the midst of a flourishing Buddhist community. There were at that time in Loyang several Buddhist temples and monasteries and a number of foreign missionaries who, with the aid of Chinese converts, were translating the sacred scriptures from India. Some of these foreign missionaries had come from India, and others had come from various states in Central Asia. There was a certain An Si-kao, a royal prince from Parthia, who had forsaken the glamour of the royal court to take the message of the new religion to far-off China, and assisting him in his work of translation we find a monk from Sogdiana near Samarkand.

It was a politically weak and disturbed China which Buddhism came to. The able, progressive early emperors of the Han Dynasty were followed by descendants to whom the consolidation of the empire became an increasingly difficult task. The disintegration of this period began a few years before the Christian era when the throne was seized by the Empress Dowager Wang and her numerous relatives, while a dissipated emperor spent his time among the courtesans whose relatives were compensated by important government positions.

At the emperor's death the seventy-year-old Empress Dowager powerfully took the lead and called to her side a relative, Wang Mang, who earlier had proved himself an astute adviser. Like Yuan Shi-kai in 1915 he used his power to further ambitious schemes of his own and almost succeeded in establishing himself emperor, but his attempts to reorganize economic and social conditions met with such public disapproval that uprisings became the order of the day until his death in 23 A.D.

Wang Mang's death marks the division line between the Western and Eastern Han Dynasty, which often in the history of Chinese art is referred to as Early and Later Han. The downfall of the Han Dynasty was postponed when a scion of a collateral branch, under the name of Kuan Wu Ti, ascended the throne. This able emperor prevented for



TOMB TILE. *Six Dynasties Period*

PHOTO: MUSEUM OF FAR EASTERN ANTIQUITIES, STOCKHOLM

THE DARK AGES

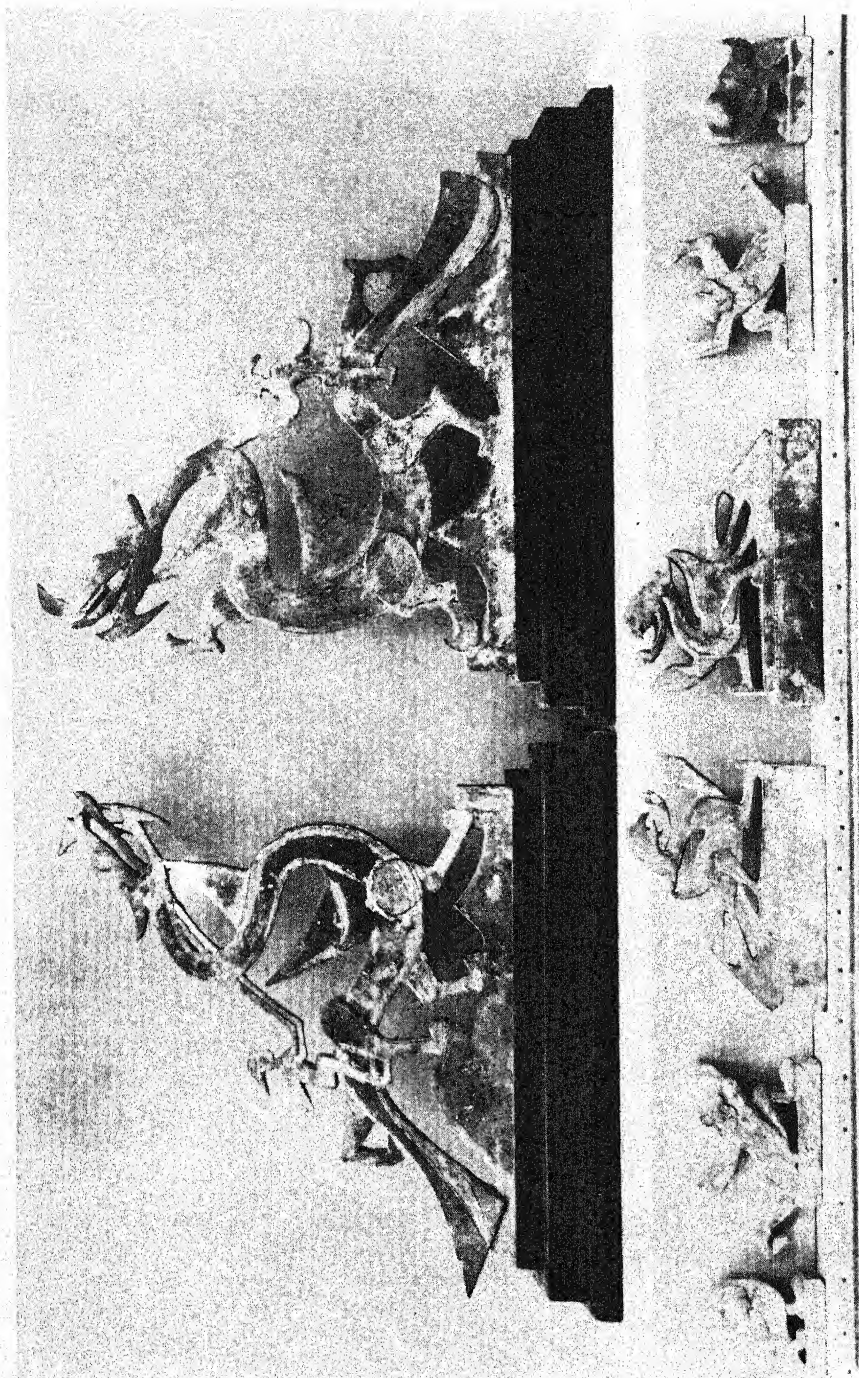
a while the impending disaster, but later history repeats itself, as weak dissolute emperors, ambitious empress dowagers and eunuch intrigues crowd the pages of China's history, until in 221 A.D. China became divided into three warring kingdoms.

The period of the Three Kingdoms which actually lasted only forty years—although the political disintegration continued for centuries—has come down to succeeding ages in a glow of romance, an heroic age which has been immortalized in novels and drama to the present day. Kuan Yü, the later god of war, who has a temple in every fair-sized town in China now, was one of the generals from this period, when picturesque war lords waged a free lance battle for a survival of the fittest.

The next four hundred years, the Six Dynasties period, which came about the same time as Europe's Dark Ages, was a period of political confusion unparalleled in Chinese history. The imperial house was pushed farther and farther south until it finally established its capital in Nanking where, during these centuries, one impotent Chinese dynasty after another came in quick succession, while the whole of North China was overrun by invading barbarian tribes. It is a period of which it is almost impossible, in a bird's-eye view, to give a clear picture until in the fifth century the powerful Topa tribe succeeded in conquering some of the lesser tribes and finally founded the Northern Wei Dynasty which was destined to play an important part in the development of Chinese art.

It was into this confused, disillusioned, tired China that Buddhism came as a great revelation. With its emphasis on the life within, meditation and withdrawal from the world, it came as a relief from the noise of battle and the turmoil of the day. Soon pagodas and temples crowned the hilltops and poets and artists withdrew to these sanctuaries to find peace for their souls.

If we can believe the Chinese records of painting which have come down to the present day, China's pictorial art, during these centuries of upheaval, was singularly free from the academic tendency which later became one of its greatest dangers, a tendency brought about by



TOMB FIGURES. *Late Han Dynasty*

PHOTO: COURTESY THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

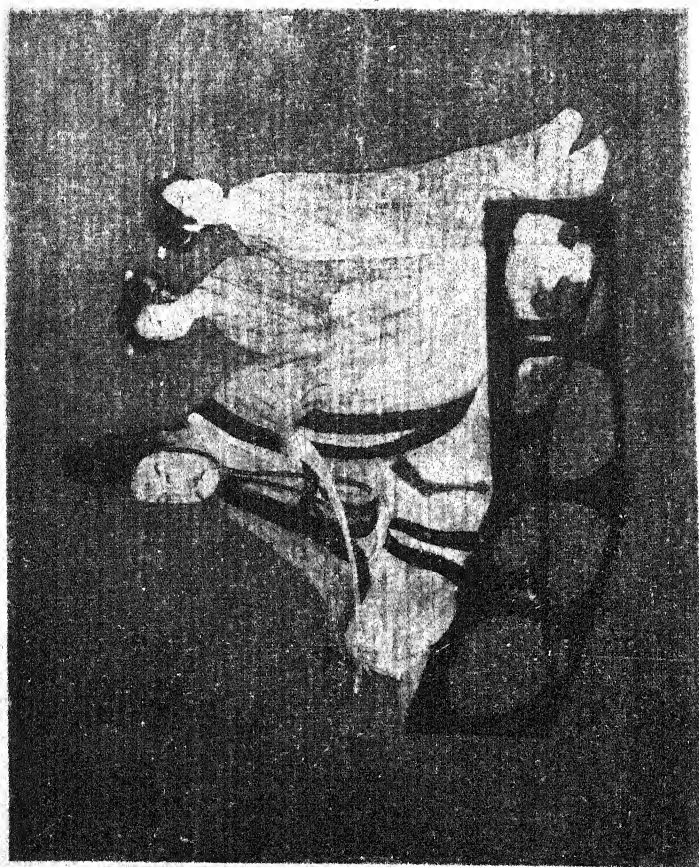
THE DARK AGES

the close relationship between writing and the art of painting. The materials used in writing, brushes, ink, silk and paper, the brush stroke itself, are the same as are used in painting. While colors, to be sure, are not often used in writing, a great deal of painting has always been done in monochrome, in which the minute, careful shading of the brush stroke created the light and shadow that gave atmosphere to the painting: exactly the same art required and appreciated in Chinese writing. It is unusual to find a painter who is not also known as a good calligraphist.

This relationship, which became more intimate as time went on, has made some scholars maintain that the ancestry of China's pictorial art is entirely to be found in the art of writing. With this view I cannot agree. Another element which had its mainspring in the magical beliefs of the unlettered mass of the people can clearly be defined from the earliest time. The earliest designs on the stone-age jars made many centuries before writing was invented, as well as the designs on the bronzes, were evidently inspired by magical beliefs; and the same is undoubtedly true in regard to the painting on the Han Dynasty grave tiles and vases.

Painters were early considered magicians with supernatural powers. Lu Pan, a contemporary of Confucius, who is now the god of carpenters, is said to have enticed the water demon to the surface of the stream while he traced its features on the ground with his heels. Giles tells another story of a third century emperor who asked the famous painter Ts'ao to immortalize the features of a dragon which the emperor had seen. Two hundred years later, when there was a severe drought, Ts'ao's painting was brought out and immediately a dense mist arose followed by hard rain. The dragon was the farmers' patron saint who in a mysterious manner brought rain to the parched ground. The origin of the dragon, which later became the imperial emblem, is shrouded in the vaporous clouds and mists which always, in painting, surrounds this fierce-looking yet benevolent monster. Chinese history of painting is filled with strange, supernatural stories about an early pictorial art which often may have been only the tracing of traditional designs.

隋文帝文像



EMPEROR AND TWO LADIES
Attributed to T'ang Dynasty or earlier
Metropolitan Museum, New York

THE DARK AGES

Gradually through its association with men of letters and calligraphy, painting was given dignity and prestige and removed from the realm of magic and the superstitions of the unlettered into the world of art and thought. But down through the centuries the subconsciousness of Chinese painting is forever bringing back memories from the magic childhood of the race, helping it to counteract the academic crystallizing tendencies which ever threatened the life of China's pictorial art.

The only painting extant attributed to this period is a scroll by Ku K'ai-chih which is now in the British Museum. Many stories have been preserved in Chinese records about this original artist who lived at Wusih not far from Shanghai, in the fourth century. While the painting in the British Museum may be a copy by a T'ang artist, there is no doubt that it represents the work of Ku K'ai-chih, who by his contemporaries was considered the greatest artist of his day. The title of nine of Ku K'ai-chih's paintings, extant in the twelfth century, have been preserved in Chinese records and one of these, "The Admonitions of the Preceptress," describes this painting.

On a piece of silk, less than a foot wide and nearly eleven feet long, which time has turned into a soft brown with the figures dimly outlined in subtle colors, the painter has pictured the domestic life at one of the Han emperor's courts. It is a succession of scenes rather than a continuous or coherent story, although traditional stories have been included in the scenes. In its gentle refinement it reflects an exceedingly sophisticated art. Lawrence Binyon, custodian of the Chinese paintings in the British Museum, writes that "for beauty of sweeping yet sensitive lines, few paintings in the world approach it."

Ku K'ai-chih's style shows clearly its relationship to the much earlier paintings on the Han tiles described in Chapter VI. The idea that this artist, who in the past has been called "the father of Chinese painting," had anything to do with the beginnings of Chinese painting must thus forever come to an end. This painting shows a fully developed pictorial art with centuries of tradition leading up to such perfection.

There are records to the effect that Ku K'ai-chih painted also many Buddhist subjects. If any of these had survived we should be able to tell



ADMONITIONS BY THE PRECEPTRESS
Section of painting by Ku K'ai-chih (4th century A.D.)
 British Museum

THE DARK AGES

to what extent the imported and indigenous art reacted on each other in the beginning; whether the two schools were fused or whether the old, subtle, swift impressionistic Chinese art had to retreat in favor of the heavier, gaudy, colorful art from abroad. The earliest Buddhist paintings from Turkestan are still under Indian influence. It is not until the following T'ang period that Chinese influence becomes obvious in the frescoes preserved in Japan and Turkestan.

The academic element in Chinese painting had its inception perhaps toward the end of this period, when Hsieh Ho in the sixth century formulated his six canons or rules for painting, which have been much emphasized by later generations. He classified all painters, up to that time, according to these standards. The arbitrary methods used in this classification are indicated by the fact that Ku K'ai-chih is placed in the third class. Giles translates the six canons as (1) rhythmic vitality, (2) anatomical structure, (3) conformity with nature, (4) suitability of coloring, (5) artistic composition and grouping, and (6) copying of classical masterpieces. Having dignified copying by placing it on a par with the fundamental tenets of the art of painting, copying was honored, made legitimate and became, as time went on, a real danger to the life of Chinese painting.

Hsieh Ho did not succeed, fortunately, in pressing the great living art of the Six Dynasties' painters into his own cramped style which, according to the books, suffered so that after 501 "his portraits bore no resemblance to the sitter." After a while, we are told, he required no sitting at all but "reproduced from memory form, expression of the eyes and hair on face and head, without any fault of any kind."

Descriptions, which have been preserved in Chinese accounts of painting, of the personalities, sayings and works of many artists who lived and worked during these four hundred years, show that the religious awakening of the time was reflected in the artists in a profound spiritual realization, nourished in solitude in communion with nature. We read about a certain Tsung Ping who lived alone in the mountains with his wife. Wrapped up in his meditations, he would often forget to return to his hut for long stretches at a time. Later when old age compelled

THE DARK AGES

him to return to civilization, he painted these beloved mountain scenes on the walls of his chamber and gazing upon them, passed on to his reward.

Another painter of this time describes the exultation which came to him in his art in the following poetic outburst which has been translated by Giles in his *Introduction to the History of Chinese Pictorial Art*. "To gaze upon the clouds of autumn, a soaring exaltation in the soul; to feel the spring breeze stirring wild exultant thoughts—what is there in the possession of gold and jewels to compare with delights like these? And then to unroll the portfolio and spread the silk, and to transfer to it the glories of flood and fell, the green forest, the blowing winds, the white water of the rushing cascade, as with a turn of the hand a divine influence descends upon the scene. These are the joys of painting."

It is evident that landscape painting, portraits, and imaginative subjects from the mythological world of old, as well as Buddhist motives, were used by the artists of this period, and that technically painting had already, at this early period, ancient traditions back of it. When to all this was added the profound spiritual and religious life of the time, when as outward life became intolerable the artists were thrown back on their own inner resources, we begin to understand the inheritance which helped to create the greatest period in Chinese art during the following T'ang Dynasty.



BUDDHIST SCULPTURE
From the Yün K'ang Caves, Shansi
PHOTO: YAMAMOTO, PEKING

IX

CAVE TEMPLES

THE epoch-making new idea which came to Chinese art with Buddhism was its glorification of the human body as the dwelling place of the divine and the importance which this new idea gave to the individual.

Until the coming of Buddhism the individual's part in the universe had been considered by the Chinese unimportant and finite, as compared to the succession of the race as a whole and to the infinite eternal elements in nature. In the Chinese life-conception, man became significant as a part of a greater whole, family, clan, cause or as a particle of the universe itself.

In contrast to this Chinese conception, Buddhism, influenced by Hellenistic art in its early years in India, found through the centuries its chief artistic expression in the human body. Mountain caves became sacred shrines where the praise of Buddha was painted on the walls and hewn in the rocks in scenes from the sacred life. Like a flood of light, the new faith surged up through Central Asia, carried by fervent missionaries through the desert oases to the Chinese border.

Several small kingdoms founded by invading nomadic tribes in the North from the fourth to the sixth century of our era, became the gateway for this intense Buddhist propaganda from without. A consolidated indigenous China with Confucianism in the saddle would probably never so completely have embraced the negative, world-renouncing Buddhist faith, so foreign to the rational, intellectual Confucian mind. The political disintegration and turmoil of these centuries became Buddhism's great opportunity.

The various nomadic tribes, who, during these centuries, had almost complete control of China north of the Yangtze River, had themselves

CAVE TEMPLES

no rigid doctrinal beliefs incompatible with the new faith. The rich, concrete imagery of Buddhism appealed naturally to the Northern barbarians who have always shown a great love for everything colorful. Without discarding the amulets and charms which hitherto had expressed their flexible animistic beliefs, Buddha figures were now added to their weird pantheon. A number of small Buddha figures in bronze, probably from this period, have been preserved, all made with a loop showing that they had been worn as amulets, in type strikingly similar to the small "Baba figures" that were a part of the nomads' fecundity cult.

Sculpture, which more than any other form became influenced by Buddhism, had never in China been considered an art in any way comparable to the arts of writing and painting. The names of sculptors have not been preserved in the histories of Chinese art as have the names of writers and painters. The art of the Shantung funerary stones, considered to be the best examples of early Chinese sculpture, is more related to a graphic art with the pictures incised into stone rather than drawn on paper or silk.

All over North China can be found to this day mountain caves, filled with Buddhist statuary, which during this and the following period were dedicated as temples to the new faith. Caves, from earliest time, have been utilized as sanctuaries by man. The paintings found in the paleolithic caves in France and Spain, representing the world's earliest art more than twenty thousand years old, were obviously not all made for a decorative and artistic purpose. Some were painted in dark inaccessible places unquestionably to ward off evil influences and to bring good luck in life's various pursuits. Taoist necromancers in China to this day hold similar beliefs when in determining where and when a house is to be built and when important functions, such as weddings and funerals, are to take place, they consult the earth and water spirits, the so-called *feng-shui*. Ornamental towers were built in China to propitiate the *feng-shui* before the pagoda came with Buddhism. Pagodas, originally built in India to house the relics of Buddha and the saints,



CHINESE ANIMAL SYMBOLISM COMBINED WITH BUDDHIST SCULPTURE

From the Yün K'ang Caves, Shansi

PHOTO: YAMAMOTO, PEKING

CAVE TEMPLES

became in China, where such relics were scarce, associated in the public mind with the *feng-shui*.

Out of the welter of invading, contending barbarian tribes, there came at last to the fore in the early part of the fifth century one power which succeeded in bringing at least a semblance of order out of chaos. The Topa tribe whose original home had been near Lake Baikal had gradually moved southward. Settling in South Mongolia and North Shansi, they succeeded under several strong leaders in conquering their neighbors until by the sixth century they were virtually in control of all of North China.

The history of the nomad tribes of Asia, who invaded China, show that some became more easily influenced by the Chinese civilization than others. In contrast to the Hsiung-nu tribes which always remained nomadic, the Topa tribe, who founded the Northern Wei Dynasty, became in less than a century completely Chinese in language, dress, and manner.

One of their kings in the middle of the fifth century tried to stem this tide by importing forty thousand Topa families who had not yet become contaminated by the Chinese civilization and Buddhist religion. Strongly opposed to Buddhism, Topa Tao tried to reinstate the old animistic beliefs of his fathers. The forty thousand new immigrants were settled near the capital, the present Tatung, and put to work, we are told, decorating some sandstone caves near-by. The Yün K'ang Caves which later were dedicated to Buddhism may then first have been used as shrines for the animistic beliefs of the nomads. I have myself investigated these empty caves in the hope of finding either Buddhist sculpture or the remains of an earlier animistic cult, but without any success except clear evidence that the caves had been prepared with a purpose. The theory in the past has been that the statuary in the earlier caves was destroyed during the Buddhist persecution under Topa Tao. There is, however, as little evidence for such a theory as there is for the other that the earlier Yün K'ang Caves were originally used in an animistic cult.

The Buddhist persecution did not last long, and as time went by the



BODDHISATVA

*From the Yün K'ang Caves, Shansi
Metropolitan Museum, New York*

CAVE TEMPLES

Topa tribe, taking the name of the former Chinese Dynasty of Wei, became ardent Buddhists. The sculpture in the Yün K'ang Caves was nearly all made during the latter half of the fifth century A.D. and represents an incredible activity for so short a period.

As their work shows, the Topa people brought with them from their pastures in the North great sculptural traditions. We read in their records that no girl could become empress without first casting a statue, and male aspirants for the throne had to participate in a similar contest. Now, the only art which these nomad peoples have left is the strange Animal Style Art described in Chapter III, and we find in the Yün K'ang Buddhist sculpture the same dynamic, rhythmic element—at times almost athletic—so characteristic of the Eurasian Animal Style Art: a characteristic conspicuously absent in later Buddhist sculpture done by Chinese or by the invaders under Chinese influence.

In a succession of caves the various Buddhist divinities and their attendants as well as scenes from the life of Buddha have been hewn in the rock itself. Some of the figures are huge, almost grotesque in their immensity. Later additions by way of paint and plaster repairs add to the first impression of tawdryness. But as one gets used to the darkness of the caves and begins to ascend the stairs of the four-story temple, built in front of two of the leading caves at a much later time, beauty and interest meet the eye at every turn.

The fascination of the Yün K'ang Caves, besides the element of strength and movement, lies in the great variety of human types sculptured in the rocks. Figures and faces step forth from the walls and ceilings suggestive of the sculpture in European cathedrals. A figure with a Chinese face wears European dress, while at the side is a figure in Buddhist garb with a face slavic in type which might have been seen in a European cloister. Other divinities show the sensuous opulence of Indian Buddhist art and one remarkably fine head has the inscrutability of the Cambodian Buddhas combined with a Siamese type of headdress. Almost without exception the sculptors paid no attention to the feet which are clumsy and stiff, while the hands of the figures have all the beauty, grace, and subtleness of Chinese and Buddhist art combined.



BUDDHIST SCULPTURE. *Wei Dynasty*

From the Lung Mên Caves, Honan

PHOTO: COURTESY C. F. YAU

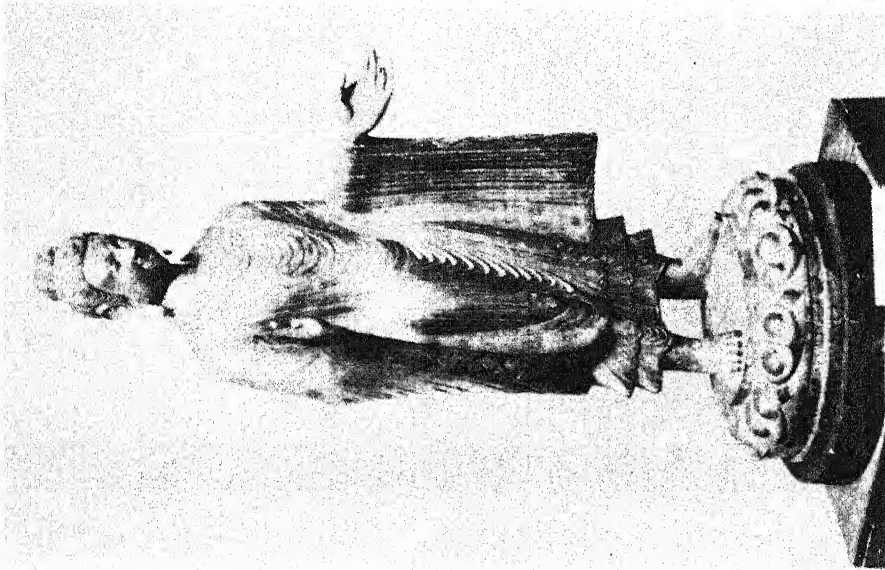
CAVE TEMPLES

Considering the probable foreign origin of the sculptors, one is surprised to discover a singularly lovely Chinese type in the female figures. The barbarians must have been strongly attracted to Chinese women to be able to express so perfectly their subtle charm. The exceedingly human, exquisite Boddhisatvas of the Yün K'ang Caves, with their elusive, tantalizing Mona Lisa smile, show Buddhist sculpture at its best.

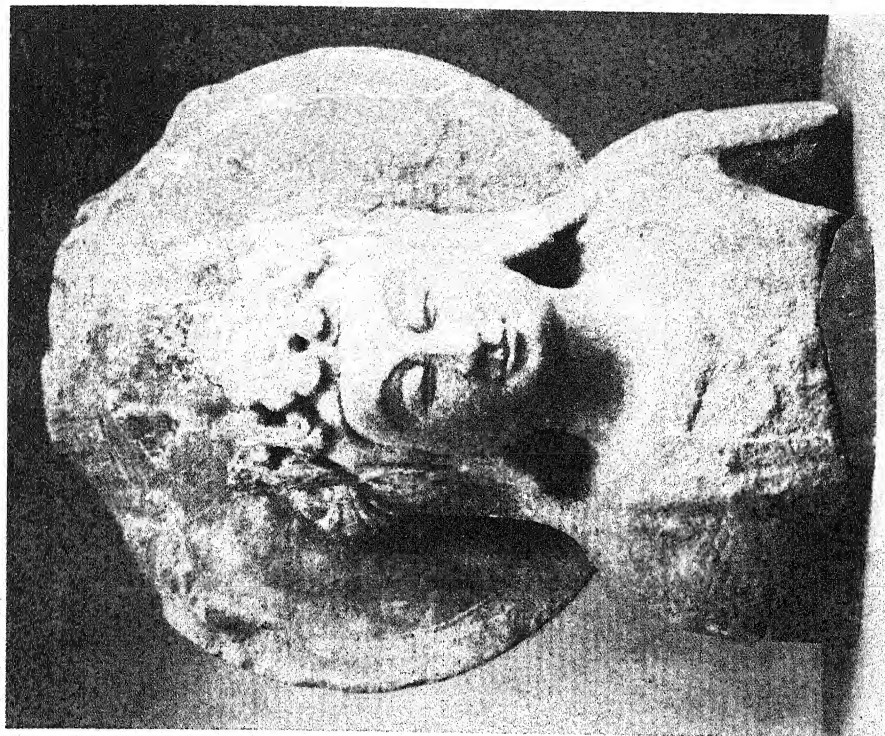
The capital of the Northern Wei Dynasty was moved in the sixth century to Loyang in Honan. By this time the barbarians had become more Chinese than the Chinese themselves. The emperor Hsiao Wei became an ardent disciple of Confucius. Chinese dress and speech became compulsory, with demotion as punishment for Tartar officials who failed to comply with this order. The region around the new capital had an ancient cultural background and proved fertile soil for the intensive religious and artistic activity of the period. The next emperor was an ardent Buddhist and thirteen thousand Buddhist temples are said to have been erected during the reigns of these two emperors. None of these temples are extant, but Honan and Shansi abound in temple caves.

The Lung Mên Caves in Honan from the sixth and seventh centuries rank in artistic importance with the earlier Yün K'ang Caves in the North. There are those who ascribe an even greater significance to the Lung Mên Caves because of the inscriptions which are here numerous. In the Yün K'ang Caves hardly any inscriptions have been found testifying to the foreign origin of the artists.

The sculpture in the Lung Mên Caves shows a change from the Yün K'ang type. The athletic element of life and strength has had to give way to the languid, measured, slow movement of the exquisite, sophisticated Chinese devotees who, in less bold relief, have been hewn in the rock. There is also to be observed a static pose in some of the Buddha figures, a tendency which became more marked as time went by. There is, however, no reason for belittling, by comparisons, either one or the other of two such sublime expressions of Buddhist sculpture, which for ages to come will remain the greatest monuments of China's sculptural art.



MAITREYA. BRONZE GILT
Wei Dynasty (5th-6th century A.D.)
 Metropolitan Museum, New York



BUDDHA. Sui Dynasty (589-680 A.D.)
Probably from the T'ien Lung Shan Caves, Shansi
 Metropolitan Museum, New York

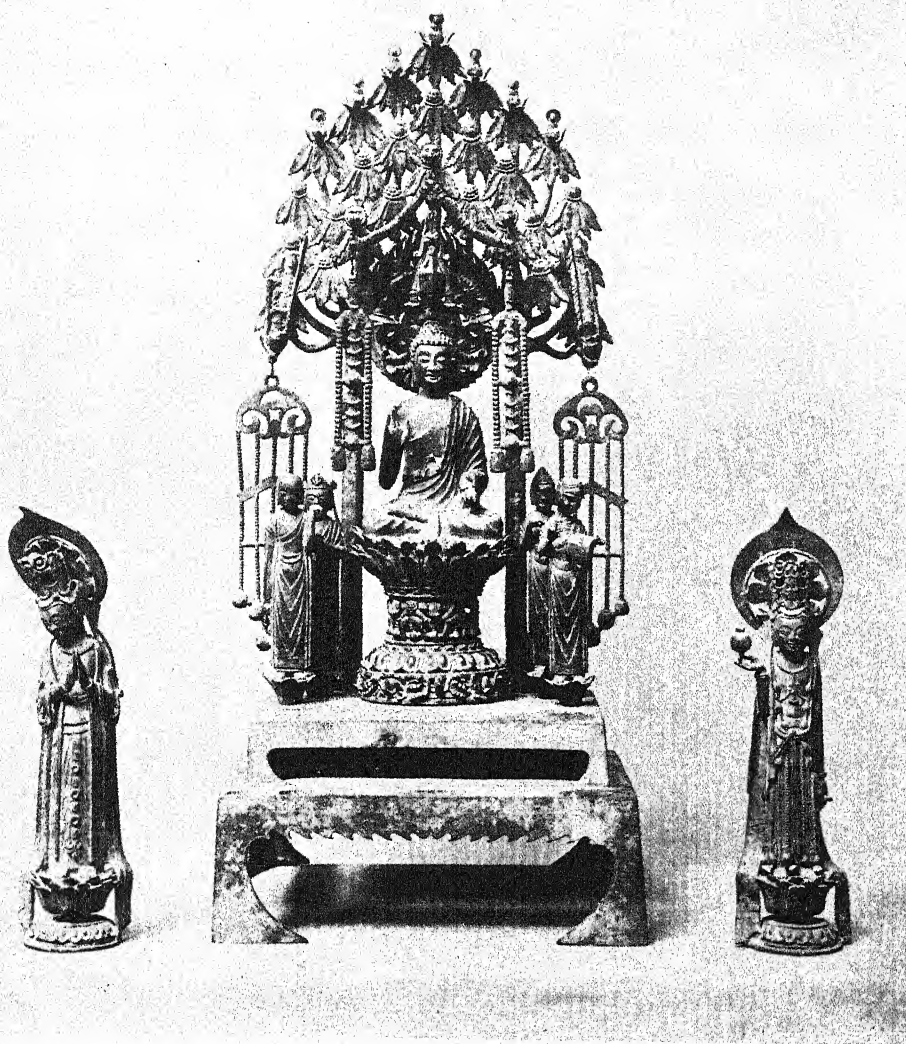
CAVE TEMPLES

Although there are many other caves extant all over Honan and Shansi, no other caves have been found in which the sculpture can be compared to that of Lung Mên and Yün K'ang. Nearly all of the lesser caves have been so robbed of their sculptures that it is difficult to judge of their original artistic value. The great financial value of these antiquities has been a temptation to Chinese as well as foreign exploiters and the marks of vandalism are seen in figures without heads and in many damaged places. The Chinese government is now trying to protect the treasures, but it is doubtful if this can be done adequately until the religious significance of the caves has been restored and resident, conscientious priests undertake the protection of the relics.

A great deal of Buddhist sculpture, smaller pieces for the temple and home, was also, during these centuries, executed in bronze. The Topa Tartars, whose original sculpture was probably cast in bronze, became the greatest experts in Buddhist bronze making. The best pieces of this art extant have as a rule Wei Dynasty inscriptions. The larger compositions are very elaborate and the prevalent festoon and acanthus design shows its Hellenistic inspiration. The earlier pieces are recognized by a singularly lovely, slender, standing Bodhisattva, a marked contrast to the heavily seated family matrons of a later time who have retained but little of the compassionate expression of Kuanyin, the Goddess of Mercy.

The Chinese genius for eclecticism, their gift for adding and using new influences without discarding the old indigenous forms, found its fullest expression in Buddhist sculpture. In carving a background for the Buddhist divinities, the Chinese sculptors reverted to type and allowed their imagination and memory free play as they carved the dragon, the phoenix, and conventionalized as well as naturalistic animals and monsters, often artistically combined with a floral design derived from Hellenistic, Indian and Persian influences.

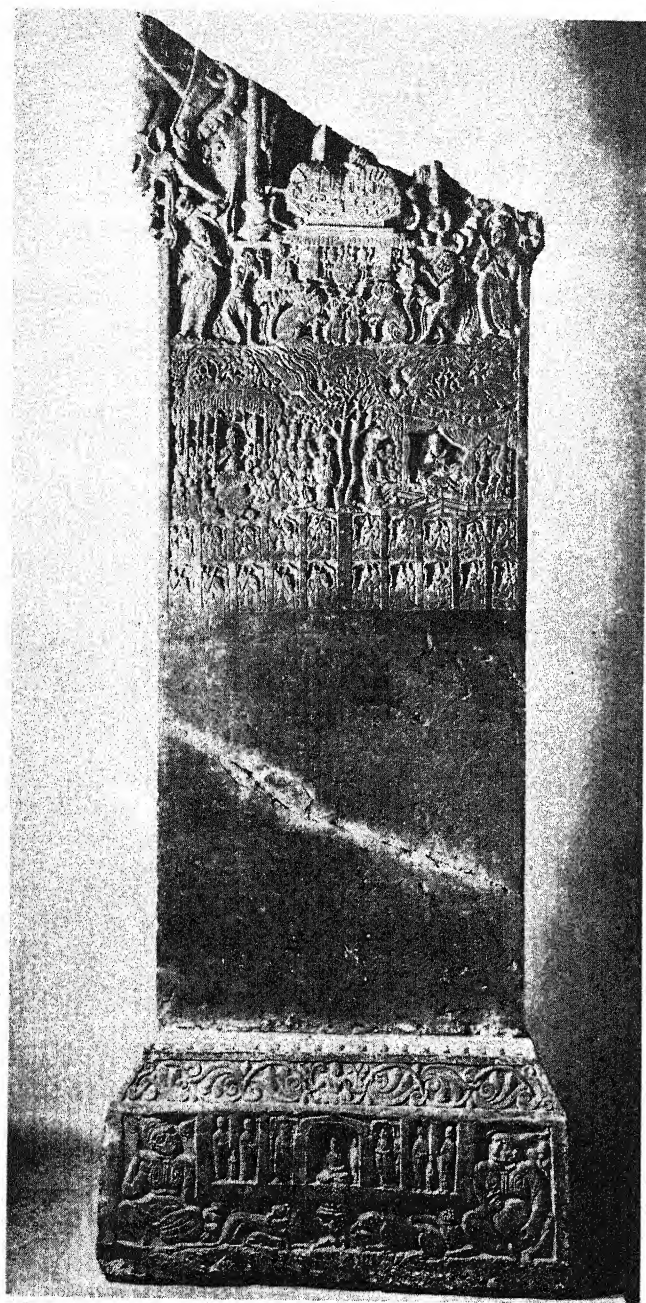
In the steles, of which many have been preserved, this eclecticism is most eloquently expressed, as here one might say that even Confucianism has been included in the beautifully inscribed texts. Before printing was invented the Confucian classics were inscribed on stones from which rubbings were made, and this art was evidently taken over by Buddhism.



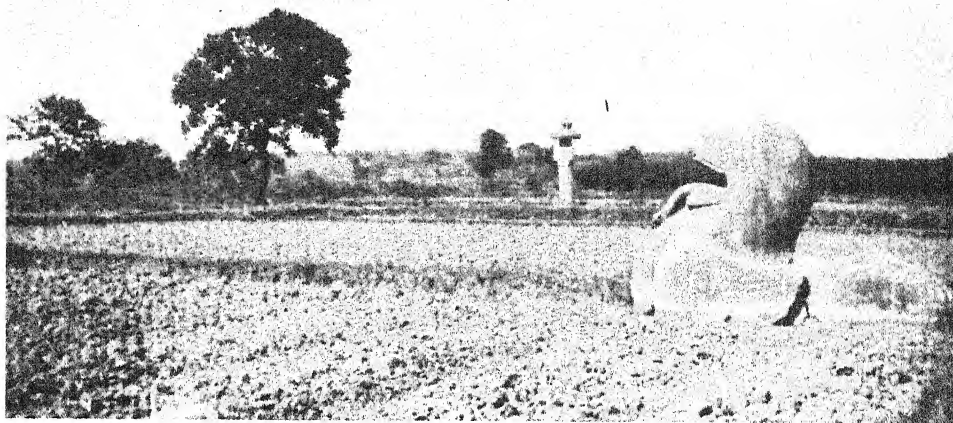
BUDDHA AMITABHA AND ATTENDANTS. CHINESE BRONZE (593 A.D.)
Boston Museum of Fine Arts

CAVE TEMPLES

One may well ask then, in an art so made up of influences from many lands, what was the Chinese contribution? Can Buddhist sculpture in China be considered an indigenous art? I believe that it can. The Chinese artists, with their rich traditions, fine technique, sophistication, refinement, reserve, and innate sense for dignity and decorum, created an art which must be considered a great and individual contribution to Buddhist sculpture as a whole, an art quite distinct from the Indian and Central Asian Buddhist sculpture.

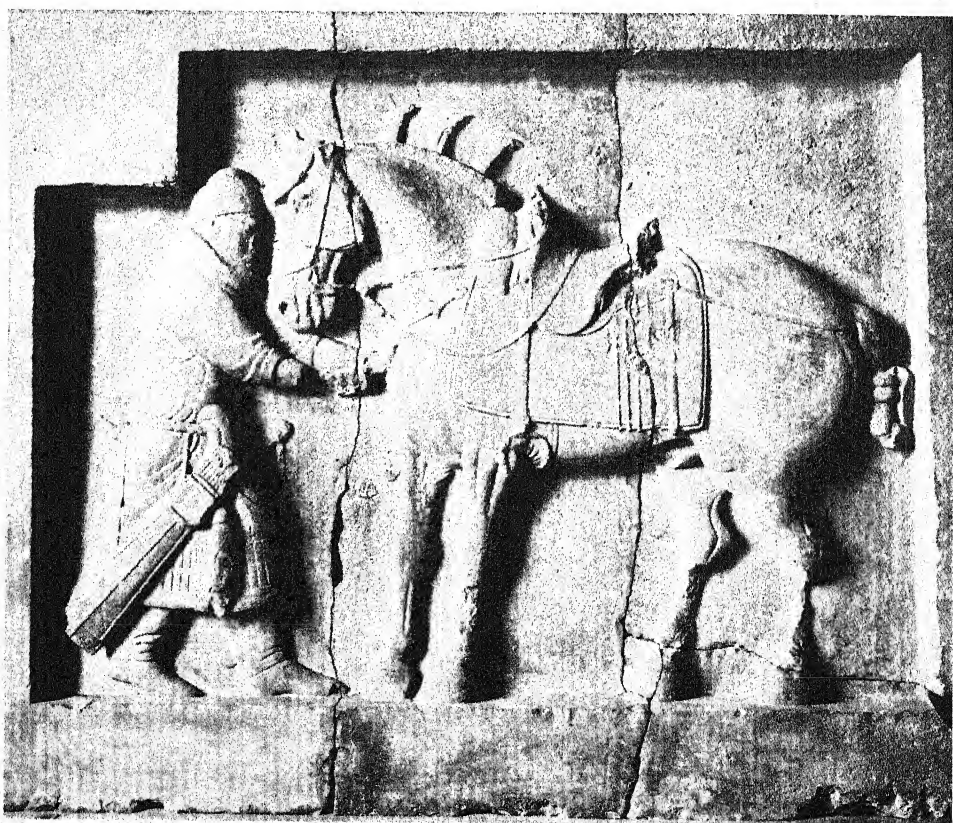


BUDDHIST STELE. *Wei Dynasty*
Metropolitan Museum, New York



STONE LION. Near Nanking
Which Guarded the Tombs of the Liang Dynasty (5th century A.D.)

PHOTO BY AUTHOR



STONE BAS-RELIEF
One of the Six Chargers of T'ang T'ai Tsung
University Museum, Philadelphia

X

THE GLORY THAT WAS T'ANG

THE remarkable recuperative powers of the Chinese civilization have never found a satisfactory explanation. During periods of foreign invasions, which nearly always followed in the wake of political and imperial decadence, China again and again seems to have been facing the fate of other ancient peoples who had their day and ceased to be, only to rise as the proverbial phoenix from the ashes of destruction and despair to new life and glory.

Karlgren in his *Chinese History* points out that these periods of renewal have invariably, almost to the present day, been preceded by periods when barbarian invasions from the North brought the infusion of a more aggressive stock to the non-aggressive peace-loving Chinese race which seemingly needed such stimulation for renewed activity.

The splendid indigenous Han Dynasty was preceded by the half-barbarian Ch'in conquest and the ascendancy of the mixed race of the border states. When this virile infusion had spent itself during the four hundred years of the Han Dynasty, there followed another four hundred years in which all of North China's population became thoroughly mixed with the foreign element, to be followed by the T'ang era, which marks the apex of China's political, artistic, and cultural attainments. Karlgren labels his conclusions from these historical observations as "perhaps fantastic," but in seeking an explanation for China's recuperative power they give valuable food for thought.

While foreign invasions brought new customs, caused changes in language and even may have changed ethnic characteristics, Wilhelm in his *Short History of Chinese Civilization* finds in the ideographic script of the Chinese an explanation for the fact that the Chinese civilization, in spite of all these changes, continued its traditions. China's literary

THE GLORY THAT WAS T'ANG

heritage during these periods of barbarian invasions was safely guarded in a language which, to use Wilhelm's words, "for centuries led an existence practically independent of the spoken language and provided a living record of the progress of the Chinese civilization." This, Wilhelm believes, "is the main reason why nothing once acquired by Chinese culture ever disappears entirely, and why its traditions have survived all changes in race and language."

Chinese history during these centuries supports eloquently both theories. While the North during the four centuries of China's Dark Ages was artistically dominated by the Buddhist influence, few monuments have survived in the South to show that the art of the new religion had succeeded in replacing the old indigenous forms, although Buddhism was here also generally accepted. On the contrary, the records indicate that some of the best artists of this period, among them Ku K'ai-chih, found in the South in spite of political confusion and the weakness of the imperial house at Nanking, a more congenial atmosphere in which to live and work.

The greatest non-Buddhist sculptural monuments have been found near Nanking. They consist of nine enormous winged lions which once guarded the tombs of the royal house of Liang, one of the many short-lived dynasties from this turbulent time. The royal graves have vanished and these monster beasts, with their proudly arched necks and open mouths which seem to roar defiance against time and decay, stand today in majestic grandeur out in the wheat fields.

While China's cultural traditions, to a degree, were preserved in the South, it was the North that produced the liberators, the strong men who finally drove out the invaders. The short-lived Sui Dynasty and the following House of T'ang which succeeded in restoring the empire, not only on the old basis but on a broader and grander basis than ever before, were Northern in their characteristics. The families of the founders of these two dynasties had for centuries been exposed to the foreign impact.

Toward the end of the sixth century the Sui Dynasty produced a leader in Wen Ti. Endowed with exceptional practical administrative



STONE OVERARCH FOR DOORWAY. *T'ang Dynasty*
Buckingham Collection

PHOTO: COURTESY THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO



GLAZED POTTERY LOHAN. *T'ang Dynasty (618-906 A.D.)*
Metropolitan Museum, New York

THE GLORY THAT WAS T'ANG

ability he brought about a semblance of order. He settled the refugee population in the North in the small rural communities which have ever been the rock foundation of the Chinese social system. The Chinese population, during the thirty years of the Sui Dynasty, is said to have increased from twenty to fifty million.

The Sui Dynasty did not, however, succeed in producing the strong military man China at this time needed to oust the barbarians who still threatened North China. This incapacity explains probably why the Sui Dynasty, in spite of its many excellent qualities, did not survive. The man for this stupendous task was found in Li Shi-min, the son of a Shansi official who, after placing his father on the throne in 618 A.D. as the first emperor of the T'ang Dynasty, himself succeeded in 627, taking the name of T'ai Tsung.

T'ang T'ai Tsung, China's greatest emperor, won his position as a military man. He made China, for a century or more, the leading military power in Asia. But T'ai Tsung was infinitely more than a military genius. He was also a great statesman, who controlled himself, the official system and even found time to codify the civil laws which, under his influence, became more humane. Every walk of life felt the beneficial effects of his ever watchful administration.

These exceptional military and administrative gifts were controlled by a keen intellect and a refined, pleasing personality. He encouraged the artistic and intellectual life by imperial favors, and built a great university and a library with more than two hundred thousand volumes near the capital at Ch'angan. To this cultural center came the leading scholars from all over the empire and the emperor, himself a scholar of no mean order, came often to hear the lectures and take part in the discussions.

With dormitory capacity for more than three thousand students, many of whom had scholarships, there came to this university not only students from all over China, but also from the neighboring lands of Tibet, Central Asia, Korea, and Japan. The Chinese civilization was then the greatest spiritual and cultural influence in the Far Eastern world.

For religious toleration and open-mindedness the first century of the

THE GLORY THAT WAS T'ANG

T'ang era is unsurpassed even in China's annals of remarkable religious freedom and lack of bigotry. Realizing in his work of reconstruction the fundamental strength of the balanced, rational Confucian tradition, T'ai Tsung gave his full support to Confucianism which also naturally appealed to a man of his intellectual type. Taoism, as expressed in superstitious practices, he despised and toward Buddhism he took a guarded, watchful attitude.

The tremendous hold which Buddhism had over the masses had developed powerful, affluent monastic orders. The abuse of power, which has everywhere been more or less associated with such institutions, was also present in China at this time; we find the emperor instituting a careful investigation of the monasteries and cloisters, with the result that many worthless priests and nuns were returned to their homes and told to take up useful lay activities.

Buddhism in China had at this time developed many sects. The two sects, which later became more powerful than any others, and were at this time already fully developed, were the Ch'an sect, whose followers placed the emphasis on the life of the spirit, meditation, and freedom from the desires of the material world, and "the Pure Land" sect, which believed in a paradise for the blessed and salvation through the mediation of the Bodhisattvas, the prospective Buddhas who had renounced the bliss of Nirvana and oblivion to be able to help suffering mankind.

A genuine desire to find new values in the Buddhist faith sent Chinese monks on pilgrimages to India. Most famous of these is Hsuan Ts'ang, who returned after many years' absence with hundreds of new scriptures and a large number of Buddha relics which, judging by the writings of these pilgrims, were considered all important in the religious life of the time. It was also during this period of political expansion that Manicheism from the Central States of Asia and the first Nestorian Christian missionaries came to China.

In 431 A.D. Nestorius, a Constantinople patriarch, had denied the divinity of Christ and was subsequently excommunicated by a church council at Ephesus. It was the followers of this doctrine in Syria who came to China in 635. A most interesting account of these early Christian

THE GLORY THAT WAS T'ANG

missionaries has been found on the famous Nestorian tablet, excavated in Shensi several centuries ago, but only more recently fully translated and understood in the West.

From Moule's translation this inscription can be paraphrased somewhat as follows: A virtuous teacher came to China from Ta-Ts'in (Syria) bringing with him records of "the great truth." After a difficult journey he arrived at Ch'angan and the emperor sent his own prime minister to welcome the foreign teacher in the west suburb. The emperor called to his presence the foreign teacher and had him explain his doctrine in the "forbidden room" (before the emperor). The emperor found the doctrine true and good and gave orders that it should be preached.

Three years later an imperial edict was issued—partly recorded on the stone—which says that the emperor after studying and contemplating the new doctrine finds it deeply convincing, that it emphasizes the essential, is concise and clear in its statements, and useful for all. Inasmuch as truth is known under many names and religion takes on various forms in diverse places, the emperor gives his sanction to the propagation of the new doctrine.

Soon after this edict a Christian church was built in the capital with a monastery for twenty-one priests. A century later the annals tell that Nestorian churches could be found in all prefectures and provincial capitals.

T'ai Tsung's great work was not, however, only that of political reconstruction and developments along intellectual, religious, and artistic lines, which accomplished to some extent what Charlemagne, about the same time, accomplished in Europe in restoring the old empire on a new basis; but his far-sighted foreign policies brought about a period of imperial expansion unprecedented in Chinese history.

To the pacifist and to those who claim that China never had imperial ambitions, it is disconcerting to have to admit that China's greatest periods of political strength, prosperity, and cultural and artistic advance, the Han and T'ang periods, were undeniably also periods of military conquest and imperial expansion. During the T'ang Dynasty, not only all of China came under imperial control, but armies were sent over the

THE GLORY THAT WAS T'ANG

Altai and Himalaya Mountains into the region of Samarkand in Central Asia and into India; while Tibet, East Turkestan, Korea, and a large part of Indo-China were added to the Chinese domain.

The Augustan era inaugurated by T'ai Tsung's brilliant régime continued for another century, although his own immediate descendants were weak and completely dominated by the Empress Wu Hou whose career has much in common with the late Manchu Empress Dowager. This powerful woman began her career as did Tz'u Hsi twelve hundred years later as a secondary wife. After T'ai Tsung's death she landed in a Buddhist cloister, but was rediscovered by T'ai Tsung's son and heir, a weak ineffectual monarch. By clever intrigues she returned to the court and was made empress in 655, replacing the unhappy, childless first lady of the land. From then on until her death, about fifty years later, the story of the Empress Wu Hou is a gloomy record of intrigues, immorality, murder, and assassinations. Even her own children were not safe if they interfered with Wu Hou's incredible lust for power.

Although in Chinese annals Wu Hou is synonymous with everything that is bad, the fact remains that China during her long régime carried on uninterruptedly the great traditions of T'ai Tsung's reign. Even T'ai Tsung's imperial policy in Central Asia was continued, and the initiative seems to have come directly from the court at Loyang where Wu Hou had moved to escape the ghosts of her tyrannical career. "Everything," says Karlgren, "indicates that the rudder of the state during these prosperous years was in the hands of this remarkable woman," who died more than eighty years old, soon after relinquishing her power to an ineffectual son.

Then followed a few years of political confusion while T'ai Tsung's descendants fought among themselves until finally Ming Huang, a grandson, was placed on the throne in 713 A.D.

Ming Huang was not his grandfather's equal as a military man but he had inherited even to an attenuated degree T'ai Tsung's esthetic qualities and intellectual interests. During the forty years of Ming Huang's reign China was a peaceful, prosperous land. Schools were established all over the realm and artists and men of letters enjoyed,

THE GLORY THAT WAS T'ANG

as never before, imperial favor. This was a springtime in China's cultural and artistic life. The long winter of her Dark Ages had come to an end and with spring came light and life, freedom from the shadows of the grave and slavish adherence to traditional forms, when beauty was loved for beauty's own sake in a joyous zest for all life had to give.

To the resplendent court at Ch'angan came the leading literary and artistic lights of the day. This was the time of Li T'ai-po and Tu Fu the poet-courtiers whose work has come down to our own generation as a surprising and refreshing revelation. This was the time of China's great painter Wu Tao-tzu, whose magic brush made the palace and temple walls radiant with landscapes and Buddhist paintings which, alas, have only been preserved in the records of Chinese painting. This was the time of Wang Wei, the poet-painter who founded the Southern and romantic school of painting and whose influence on China's pictorial art can hardly be exaggerated. A gentle elusive soul of whom it is written that his poems were paintings and his paintings poems. This was the time of the beautiful Yang Kwei-fei who became the idol of the court. Down through the centuries even to the present day the names of Ming Huang and Yang Kwei-fei are synonymous with all a Chinese considers beautiful and romantic.

Toward the end of his life Ming Huang became the victim of evil advisers and his own love for pleasure. The advent of Yang Kwei-fei, who came to the court as a concubine to the emperor's eighteenth son, but who was later added to the emperor's own harem, was the beginning of the end of his splendid reign. In a whirl of pleasures the aged emperor failed to read the warnings of coming disaster until in an uprising Yang Kwei-fei and many of her relatives were killed.

The House of T'ang came very near to an end at this time, but was saved by Ming Huang's son and successor and an able grandson who vigorously put an end to the uprising. During the next century and a half of the T'ang Dynasty's existence the imperial greatness of the first century and more was never restored, but the economic prosperity remained and enabled the cultural and artistic interests to continue uninterrupted in spite of a declining imperial house.

XI

THE ART OF THE T'ANG ERA

NOT until our own day has China been exposed to a more sustained foreign impact than during the T'ang Dynasty. The foreign embassies bringing gifts from afar to the imperial court, the Chinese merchants, officials, and soldiers returning from the expeditions along the caravan routes across Central Asia, the foreign students at the university, and the foreign missionaries—all these and many other contacts brought to China new impressions and visions of distant lands which are reflected in the art of the T'ang era.

Persian art brought color and certain conventionalized forms; Hellenistic-Buddhist influences are seen in the draperies and in the prevalent acanthus and lotus designs. The grape, said to have come to China with Chang Ch'ien in the second century B.C., now was used frequently as a decorative motive especially in the bronze mirrors which sometimes have a silver lining.

Bronzes, in the T'ang era, became almost completely secularized. Highly decorative pieces were made, often with a gold or silver wash. Precious metals were used in the making of personal ornaments; exquisite filigree work was preserved in these dainty decorative objects. Silver and gold also were used in the making of vases and bowls. The gold and silver work from this era, in its beauty and refinement of design and perfection of workmanship, has never been surpassed.

All the art from the T'ang period expresses a joyous freedom from conventional traditions. The pottery bowls and vases show especially youthful vigor and cheerfulness in their highly colored simple designs, so suggestive of a great deal of experimental modern pottery.

Pottery bowls during the T'ang era became identified with the tea cult which was later carried to such lengths in Japan. The earliest ref-

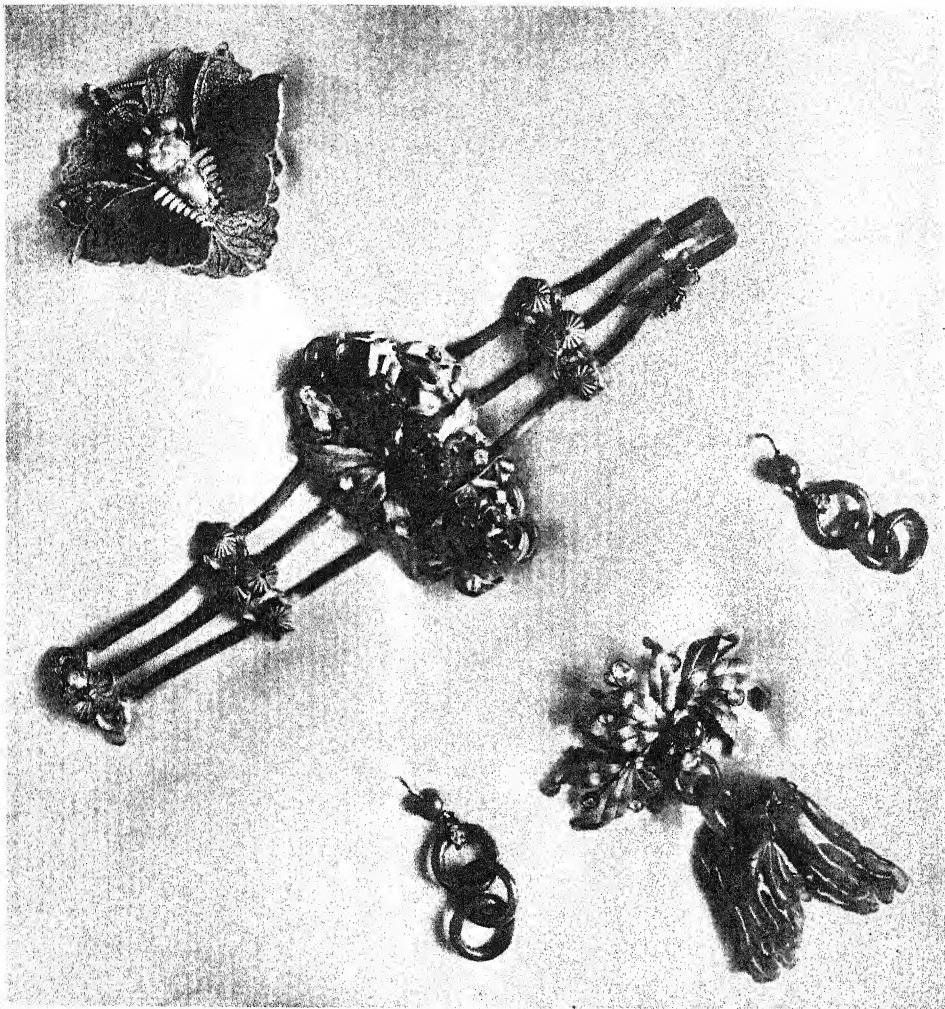
THE ART OF THE T'ANG ERA

erences to T'ang kilns can be found in the classic on tea, the *Ch'a Ching*, written by Lu Yü in the middle of the eighth century. Among tea drinkers, Hobson tells us, the Yü Chou bowls were considered the best though there were those who considered Hsuing Chou higher. Five other kilns are mentioned in the *Ch'a Ching*, all supplying tea bowls, but none were held in such esteem as the Yü Chou bowls. The tea cult was a cult of beauty and the amenities of life and became an inspiration for the prolific poets of the T'ang era. The green Yü Chou cups are likened to "moulded lotus leaves" while the white Ta Yi bowls are said to have "surpassed hoarfrost and snow."

The most conspicuous and beautiful feature of later Chinese architecture is the use of colored glazed tiles and the ornamental figures which adorn the ridge and gracefully curved roof. These tiles range in color from black and grey through deep blue and jade green to brilliant azure and the golden glory of the imperial yellow. How early the Chinese builders began to use glazed tiles we do not know. The first time it is mentioned in literature, according to Laufer, is during the T'ang period when a certain Ts'ui Yung erected on Mount Sung in Honan a memorial temple covered with glazed tiles in honor of his mother. The fact that this particular feature, which later became the usual thing, is mentioned, would lead one to think that it was something out of the ordinary at this time.

By far the larger group of the ceramics from the T'ang Dynasty is made up of the grave figures which continued to be made. The prosperity of the period and the emphasis placed on the amenities of life is eloquently expressed in these figures which usually show excellent modeling and sometimes a fine glaze. The kitchen stoves and utensils and the rude retainers from the Han Dynasty graves are now replaced by charming musicians and dancers, polo-players, gentlemen of leisure and ladies of the court. Instead of the heavy oxen and carts of an earlier time we find excellently sculptured camels and high-spirited chargers, depicting imperial mounts imported from distant Bactria and Ferghana.

Six horses beloved by the Emperor T'ai Tsung have been preserved, sculptured in stone. These bas-reliefs, considered by the Chinese among



GOLD ORNAMENTS. T'ang Dynasty
Metropolitan Museum, New York

THE ART OF THE T'ANG ERA

their greatest art treasures, show a nameless Chinese sculptor from this time capable of work which, with impunity, can be compared to the world's greatest sculpture.

A great deal of Buddhist sculpture continued also to be made, and the esthetic refinement of the time is seen in the dress and ornamentation of the divinities. Some of the Buddhist art from the T'ang era is singularly suggestive of early Christian art. To what extent Buddhist art influenced early Christian art is an intriguing but little-explored field.

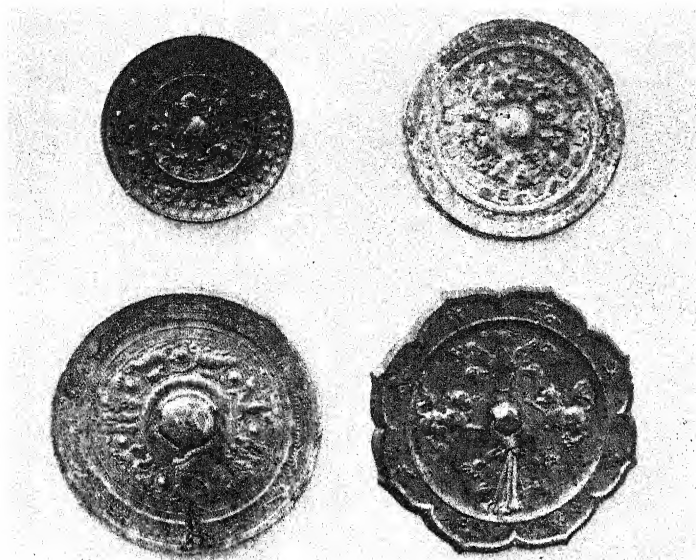
Buddhist monasteries began, probably during the T'ang Dynasty, to experiment with printing to satisfy the Buddhist passion for reduplication. The Empress Shotoku in Japan printed in 770 one million charms, some of which are preserved, to be placed in small pagodas to bring long life and protection to the old empress who nevertheless died the following year.

China had from a very early time made magic seals to be impressed in clay and other plastic material to prevent evil and bring good luck in life's various pursuits. A large group of such seals, during the last few years, has come to light in Shensi and other places in North China. A frequent cruciform design made the missionaries, who rediscovered these seals, believe that they had some connection with Nestorianism and so named them, quite wrongly I believe, "Nestorian Crosses." I have examined a hundred or more of these seals and feel convinced that they belong to a cult of magic which is undoubtedly much earlier than Nestorianism in China. The swastika is used frequently in the designs which show an endless variety of combinations.

The Confucian classics were inscribed on stones in the second century A.D. and with the Chinese invention of paper in 105 A.D. it was but a step to make ink rubbings of these inscriptions.

All these experiments in reduplications and impressions paved the way for the invention of printing which appears in a highly perfected form in a copy of the *Diamond Sutra* dated 868 A.D. and found in the sealed manuscript chamber in the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas at Tun-huang.

From the tenth century onward Central Asia was flooded with printed



BRONZE MIRRORS. *T'ang Dynasty*
Metropolitan Museum, New York



POTTERY PLATE. *T'ang Dynasty*
Buckingham Collection

PHOTO: COURTESY THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

THE ART OF THE T'ANG ERA

Buddhist pictures and tracts. The Chinese invention of paper, the prerequisite for printing, was brought to Samarkand in 751 by Chinese paper makers who had been captured by the Arabs. From here, by slow stages, paper finally reached Europe in the twelfth century about a thousand years after it was invented in China.

With the many contacts between China and the West during the T'ang Dynasty's far-flung dominion, it would not seem unreasonable to look for Chinese influences in the period that preceded Europe's renaissance. Europe printed religious pictures and playing cards nearly a hundred years before Gutenberg's day and playing cards almost certainly came to Europe from China. When the origin of European block printing is better known we shall perhaps know if Buddhism had any share in the development of early Christian art.

Histories of Chinese painting indicate certainly that the artists of the T'ang Dynasty were keenly aware of a world beyond the Chinese border. Yen Li-tê, a leading T'ang painter, is known for his pictures "of the people of strange countries, and of such-like weird and uncanny subjects in which the Liang and Wei Dynasty no one has surpassed." (Translation from Giles.) Either to him or to his brother Yen Li-pên is also ascribed a painting entitled "A man from Ta-ch'in" (Syria) reproduced in an early woodcut from the fourteenth century, now in the Cambridge Museum.

Another painter, Li Chien, and his son Li Chung-ho, were also, according to Giles, "famous for their paintings of barbarian men and horses," and Wei-ch'ih I-seng from far-off Khotan is mentioned in the Chinese histories of painting as an artist who enjoyed imperial favor.

The only undoubtedly authentic paintings from the T'ang period are frescoes excavated and discovered in temples and caves in the desert oasis and on the desert border in Turkestan and in the Horiyuji temple in Japan. The fully developed Buddhist iconography and other features show Indian influences still to be strong, but the architectural drawings, the dress and features, especially of the donors who are often painted in the corner, as well as the technique, indicate Chinese artists.

This provincial school out on the border of the desert and in Japan



PILGRIM BOTTLE. *T'ang Period Pottery*
Buckingham Collection

PHOTO: COURTESY THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

THE ART OF THE T'ANG ERA

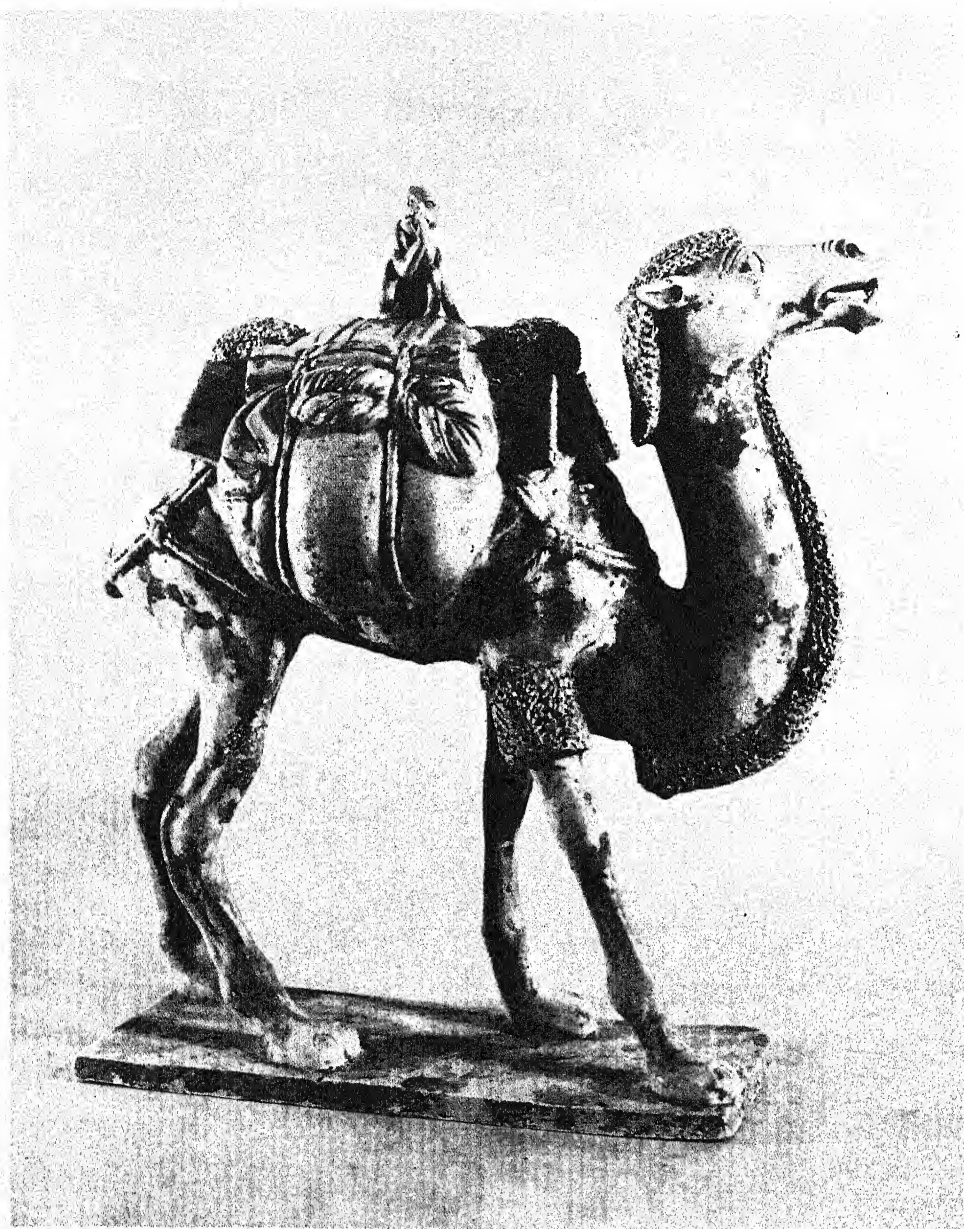
flourished contemporaneously with the greatest period of China's pictorial art. In these paintings we get tantalizing glimpses of what the art of the T'ang Dynasty may have been. If provincial artists on the desert border and in distant Japan could produce such works of art, what must the greater art at the center of Chinese life have been like?

Copying the ancient masters, which has been practised by the best painters from the T'ang Dynasty to the present day, makes it almost impossible to determine the authenticity of Chinese paintings. Signatures, so all important on Western works of art, play a minor rôle on Chinese paintings. The seal of the painter was often copied with the painting and to make the confusion worse confounded the copyist, and subsequent owners added their own seals. For identification we have to rely more on descriptions in books and on a certain internal evidence which helps one to detect the spirit of the artist, as revealed in Chinese histories of painting, in his work.

Historical sources give the names of more than a hundred painters from the T'ang period and descriptions of their best-known works. Painters at this time found their inspiration in a great variety of subjects, and many are known for some particular specialty. There was Ts'ao Pa and his pupil Han Kan who loved to paint the horse; Tai Sing who painted the oxen, and Hsieh Chi, a great calligraphist, who is known for the crane, emblem of longevity, which often appears in his paintings. Chang Nan-pên is known for his mastery over fire and Sun Wei for painting water in a remarkable way.

It is evident that realism at this time was considered desirable. Realistic landscapes and life-like portraits and paintings of animals are favorably commented upon. It is told about Han Kan that he was ordered by the emperor to take some lessons from Ch'en Hung. When called to task for not following the royal instruction he answered, "Your majesty, my teachers are all in the Imperial stables."

In the records of China's pictorial art the T'ang painter Wu Tao-tzŭ stands supreme. A poor orphan boy, he showed already as a child his remarkable gifts, and was brought at an early age to the imperial court. According to the books, he had, like Ku K'ai-chih—who we are told



GRAVE FIGURE. T'ang Dynasty
Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm

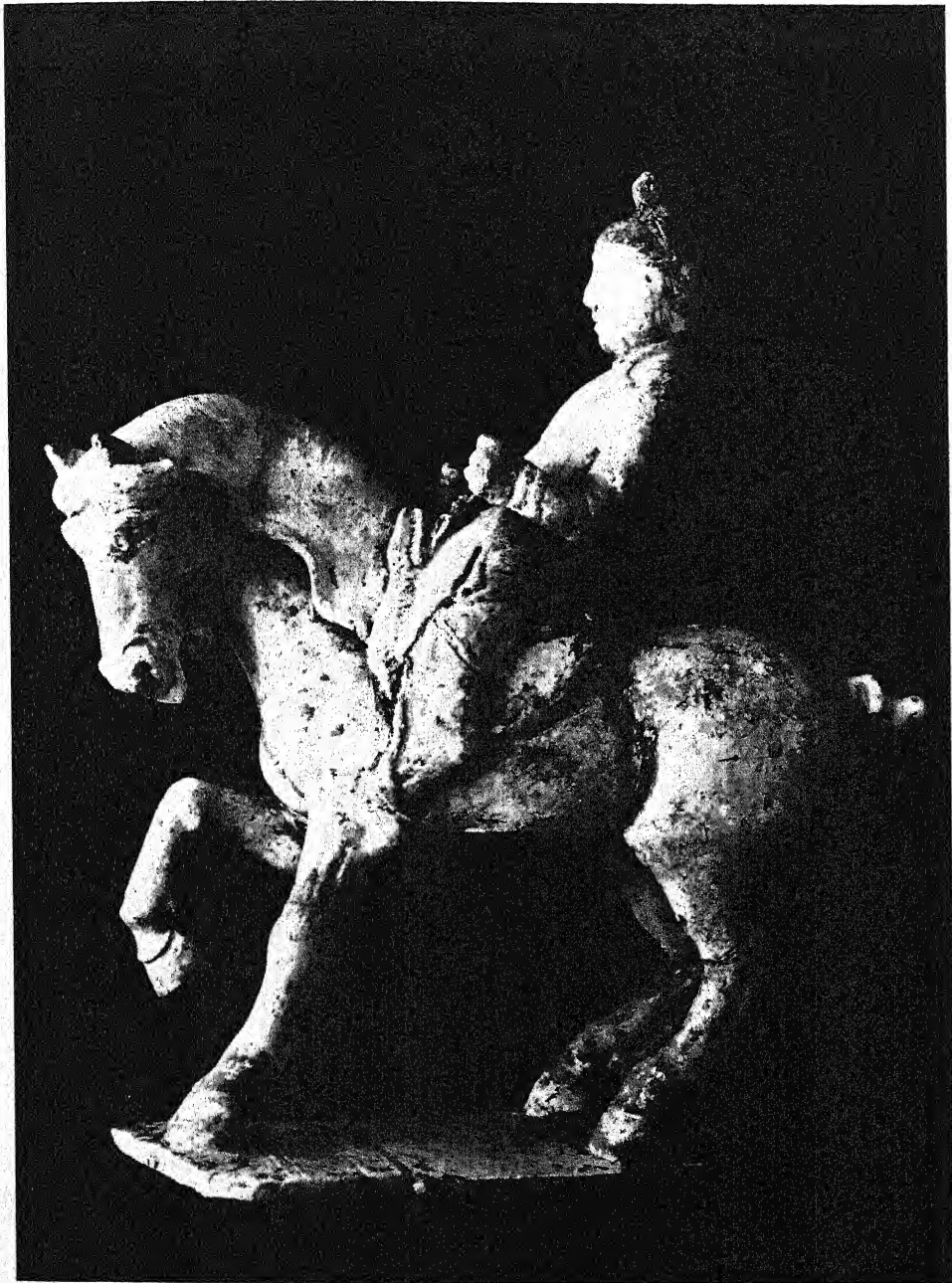
THE ART OF THE T'ANG ERA

greatly influenced his painting—a wide range of subjects. He is said to have painted over three hundred frescoes on temple walls, and historical sources give the titles of ninety-three of his pictures which were in the Imperial collections in the twelfth century.

The descriptions of Wu Tao-tzū's paintings indicate a realistic impressionistic style. Even his inspirational paintings with Buddhist and mythological motives are described as unusual because of their atmosphere of realism. Giles, quoting an art critic from the twelfth century, says: "This picture which was painted by Wu Tao-tzū is very different from those now to be seen in temples and pagodas. It has no 'Knife Forest' (where the wicked are impaled on swords), no cauldron of boiling water, no ox-headed or green-faced lictors; and yet its gloomy horrors are such as to make beholders sweat and their hair stand on end, themselves shivering all the time, though it may not be cold. It has caused men to seek after virtue and give up evil practices; after which who can say that painting is only a small art."

The art of magic with which the popular imagination endowed their great painters made contemporary and later writers place greater emphasis on Wu Tao-tzū's religious works, although he is also known to have been a great landscape painter. His landscapes, painted on some of the walls of the imperial palaces, were probably not as accessible as his temple frescoes, where the populace could gather around watching the artist as in a "few rapid strokes" he produced works which "everybody declared must have been guided by a god."

He was sent by the emperor to far-off beautiful Szechuen to bring back sketches for the palace walls, where after his return it is written that in a single day he threw off a "hundred miles of landscape." Li Ssū-hsün, who founded the Northern School of painting and who was known for his realistic landscapes, was asked to fill a wall in the same room. When comparing the work of the two men the emperor exclaimed with great tact, "Li Ssū-hsün's picture of months and Wu Tao-tzū's picture of a day are both masterpieces indeed." The story of Wu Tao-tzū's life, filled with magic and wonder, came to a picturesque



TERRACOTTA GRAVE FIGURINE
Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm

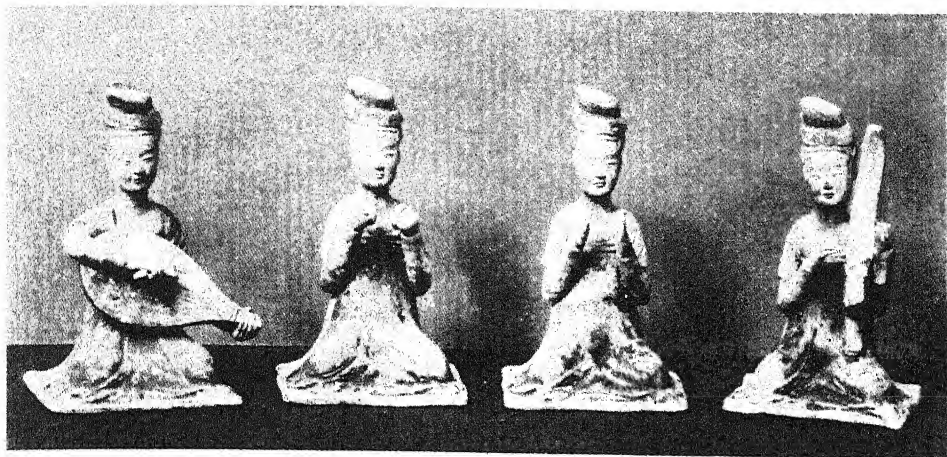
THE ART OF THE T'ANG ERA

climax in the popular belief that he entered a cave in one of his own landscapes and was seen no more.

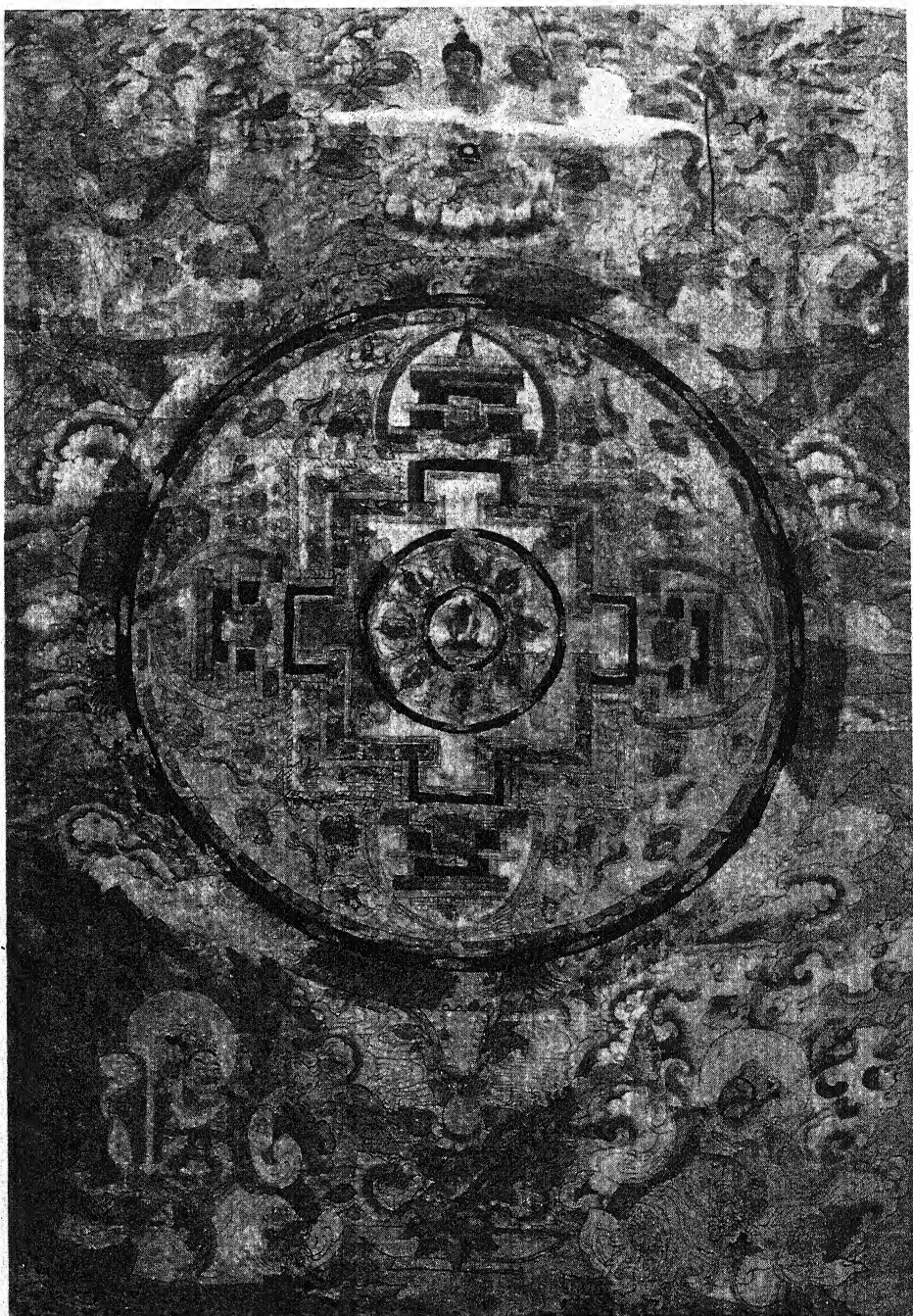
Chinese painting about this time is said to have been divided in the Northern and Southern Schools, although the division at this time had no geographical meaning. It is, on the whole, an open question if the importance given to the two schools was not a later development imposed by scholar artists who found an outlet in theories, rules, and canons rather than in vital creative work. Chinese painting, down through the ages, has ever had to fight for its life against the deadening effect of these lesser artists who spoke with authority, not because of their art, but because of their scholarship. Wu Tao-tzū has never been claimed by either one or the other school. So great a genius could not be made to fit the limited frame of any one school. The division during the T'ang Dynasty was evidently brought about largely by the temperamental differences and consequent artistic preferences of the founders of the two schools.

Li Ssū-hsün, known as a great landscape painter and founder of the Northern School, was a descendant of the first T'ang emperor, T'ai Tsung. He held a high official position and during the reign of Ming Huang was made a general and duke. He seems to have inherited some of his great ancestor's sturdy vigor, for his paintings were known for their realism and vivid coloring. Later scholar-artists condemned his work, according to Giles, as "coarse and hard with nothing scholarly about it." It seems nevertheless to have had a strong appeal to his own contemporaries, and the Emperor Ming Huang is quoted by Giles to have exclaimed before a just completed door-screen by Li Ssū-hsün, "Your skill is more than mortal; at night I can hear the splash of water in your picture." Several delightful stories are told about this painter to show the great realism of his work. His son, Li Chao-tao, was also a well-known painter and succeeded his father as a leader in the Northern School of painting.

In Wang Wei, who founded the Southern School, we find an elusive, retiring, scholarly poet-painter, an artist who found in painting an



TERRACOTTA GRAVE FIGURES. T'ang Dynasty
Metropolitan Museum, New York



BUDDHIST PAINTING ON SILK

*Attributed to T'ang Dynasty
Metropolitan Museum, New York*



KUANYIN. WOOD. *Sung Dynasty (12th century A.D.)*

PHOTO: BOSTON MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

THE ART OF THE T'ANG ERA

escape from life and its harsh realities: the complete antithesis to Li Ssü-hsiün's successful worldly career of officialdom and court life.

As contrasted to the vigorous, colorful Northern School of realism, the Southern School has been called romantic; but the vague, other-worldly paintings of this school, as they have come down to the present day in the landscapes of the Sung Dynasty masters, express age and maturity rather than romanticism. They express in a sense defeat, certainly an escape from a world of disillusion rather than the hopefulness of youth and romance.

Wang Wei was the artistic prophet of his day who, ahead of his time, became conscious of the impending storm which broke loose in 907 when the last T'ang emperor, a small child, was forced to abdicate in the midst of barbarian aggression and civil strife.



KUANYIN

Fresco from Horiyuji Temple, Japan. T'ang Dynasty

北苑真率



LANDSCAPE. *Attributed to Tung Yüan*
Section of Long Scroll

PHOTO: BOSTON MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

XII

ARTISTIC FULFILMENT

AFTER the house of T'ang had come to an end, there followed the inevitable interlude of political upheaval that separates all the great periods in Chinese history. In fifty years five dynasties followed each other in rapid succession until an able general succeeded in gaining the upper hand and ascended the throne as the first emperor of the Sung Dynasty in 960.

T'ai Tzu's ascendancy over his rivals was gained by military successes, but he retained his position by giving his civilian advisors greater power and by reducing the army. The war lords were given civilian positions and landholdings, and a large part of their armies were returned to the farm. While this brought about internal order and reduced the chances for renewed civil strife, it vastly decreased China's resistance to foreign aggression which continued during the entire period of the Sung Dynasty. China found itself one thousand years ago, as she does today, between the devil and the deep sea of external aggression and the need for internal organization which, then as now, needed diametrically conflicting remedies for a successful solution.

An effort was made to solve this problem during the reigns of the first emperors. Military expeditions were sent against the Kitan tribe in the Northeast and against the Hsia kingdom in the Northwest, but they were not successful and led to serious difficulties at home.

Resorting to the old expediency of an alliance with part of the enemy, China invited further trouble which reached its climax when the allies appeared as an enemy before the gates of the capital at Kaifeng. The artist-emperor Hui Tsung, panic-stricken, abdicated in favor of his son, who prevented immediate defeat by promising enormous sums to be paid in silver, gold, and silk.

ARTISTIC FULFILMENT

Satisfied with their gain, the Tartars started on the homeward trek, but were soon overtaken by a Chinese army which had hastily been gathered together. In battle the Chinese suffered a terrible defeat. The capital was sacked and the entire imperial court, over three thousand persons, were carried into captivity, never again to see their native land.

A younger son of the emperor, who had escaped, was made emperor of the Chinese empire which was reorganized south of the Yangtze River with its capital, first in Nanking and later in Hangchow, and marks a period of constant conflict between the Chinese South and the Tartar North.

The artist-emperor Hui Tsung, to whom is attributed many excellent paintings, had deserved a better fate. In all Chinese history there is not a more pathetic incident than the exile of this sensitive artist and great lover of Chinese antiquities. That the great art traditions of the T'ang and early Sung periods continued uninterruptedly in spite of this great calamity shows how sound the foundation had been laid and how deep the roots had gone into the life of the masses.

Hui Tsung had amassed great collections of Chinese art during his reign. His collection of paintings alone is said to have numbered more than five thousand scrolls. Quantities of these art objects were looted when the capital was sacked and the court carried away, but the carefully worked out catalogues which the emperor had had prepared remained and are to this day an important source of information.

In the early years of the Sung Dynasty a great painter, Li Ch'eng, had brought landscape painting as never before into vogue. He was another member of that remarkable Li family which had produced the Dynasty of T'ang and the great T'ang painter Li Ssū-hsün. He is described as an unconventional, temperamental artist, somewhat dependent upon wine for his inspiration. Li Ch'eng's landscapes are said to have been "true to nature" and colorful, which probably means that he followed the Northern School of painting. Translating a Chinese critic, Giles writes, "Beneath Li Ch'eng's fingertips would come forth range behind range of lofty peaks, with shrines and cottages peeping forth,—in these he excelled indeed; dense groves or thin groups of



PAINTING, INK AND TINT ON SILK. *Attributed to Kuo Hsi. Sung Dynasty (11th century A.D.)*
"Autumn in the Valley of the Yellow River"
Freer Gallery, Washington, D. C.

ARTISTIC FULFILMENT

trees, flowing water, shallow or deep." "Li Ch'eng," said another Chinese critic, "was superhuman, unique in the present and the past and an example for a hundred generations of artists."

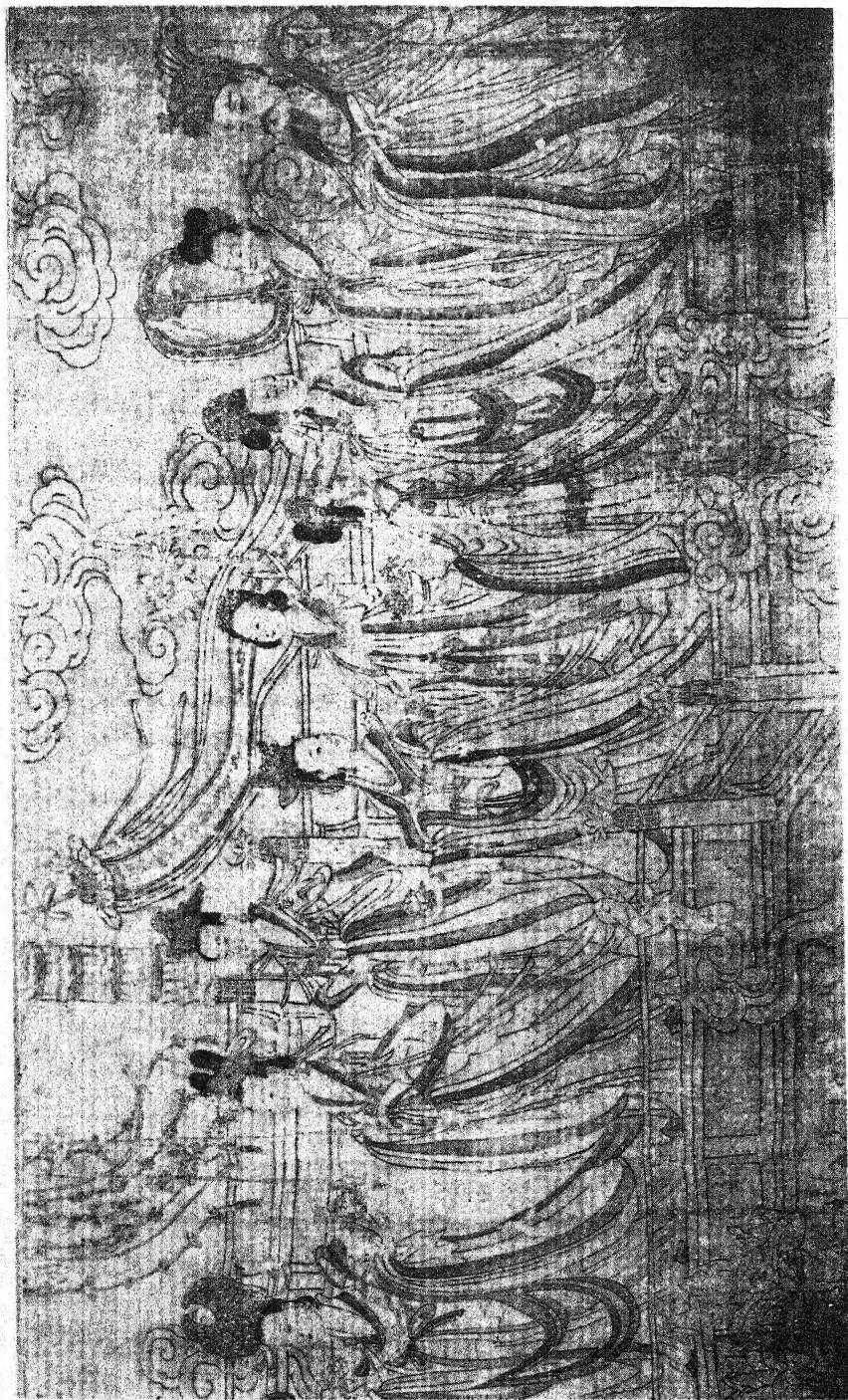
Fan K'uan, another great painter from the earlier Sung period, began by imitating Li Ch'eng's style, but after a while found he would do better by studying nature itself. So he "retired to a beautiful mountain in Shensi and there, gazing upon the shifting values of cloud and mist, the difficult effects of wind and moon, shadow and light, his soul was filled with inspiration." (Translation by Giles.)

Tung Yuan, to whom is attributed the superb landscape in the Boston Museum, belonged also to this earlier group of landscape painters. He is said to have resembled Wang Wei in "his use of neutral tints" and Li Ssü-hsün in his coloring. In landscape painting he seldom drew on his imagination, but painted the hills and countryside of his own native place at Kiangnan in Central China.

The description of Tung Yuan's style indicates a compromise between the two schools of painting which during the latter half of the Sung Dynasty assumed a more definite demarkation. So much so, that from now on, the two schools can be said, to a certain extent, to follow geographical lines.

The artists of the later Sung period as they were driven southward by the conquering Tartars of the North reflect in their paintings the political disillusionment of the time. As external life became intolerable, they turned inward in contemplation and reflection. There is a marked difference between the paintings of the men who remained and continued the more vigorous traditions of the North and the men who in Southern Sung found a refuge from the turmoil of the day. Their paintings are dreamy and vague, lacking in color, many preferring to use only monochrome.

The landscapes of the Southern Sung Dynasty painters reflect in their elusive other-worldliness the spiritual escape which the artist of the day had found in Taoist mysticism with its pantheistic tendencies, a reaction from Buddhism which had become superficial and tawdry. The Taoist



DETAIL OF "FIVE RULERS AT THE NEW YEAR'S RECEPTION." By Wu Tsung-Yuan. Sung Dynasty
Metropolitan Museum, New York

ARTISTIC FULFILMENT

movement was given a great impetus when the Emperor Hui Tsung came under its influence.

It would, however, from all accounts be far from the truth to give the impression that the Sung artists were religious mystics in an ascetic sense. To the contrary, they seem on the whole to have been men who enjoyed to the full the good things of this life. A Sung painter's ideal day was to drift peacefully down the stream of life in the convivial company of a few kindred souls who could share with him leisure and the bliss of nature's solitude over a jug of wine. Considering the temperate habits of present day Chinese one is surprised to find how many painters and poets at this time depended on wine for their inspiration.

To the modern Western eye the Sung landscapes of the Southern School seem enigmatical, lacking in perspective in the Western sense of the word. But the Chinese had nevertheless quite early a well-formulated theory as to perspective, and the type used was the result of choice and not of ignorance. Perspective painting is, after all, a convention for representing three dimensions in two; compromises have always been made and are inevitable. "The chief difference between occidental and Chinese perspective," says Benjamin March, "is in the point of sight; the occidental is fixed, the oriental infinitely movable, so while one looks at a Western painting, one moves through a Chinese."

The interpretation of the Sung landscapes is, in the final instance, perhaps to be found in the psychology of the artists. Sung painting had become a studio art of scholar artists who in their work expressed ideas and feelings rather than the immediate delight of color and form of the true artist.

The Sung painter who was also often a poet would resort to the river or mountainside. In solitude he would listen to what nature had to say, until his soul was filled with its spirit. Then he would go home or retire to his hut, place a piece of paper or silk on a table and tell with his brush the story of what he had seen and felt; more often, evidently, of what he had felt. There is a mystic atmosphere of remoteness over the Sung landscapes, the impression of an attempt to visualize another dimension, in its effect sometimes suggested by modern air photographs.



PAINTING ON SILK. *Attributed to Li Lung-Mien. Sung Dynasty*
"Holy Men Traveling to the Buddhist Heaven"
Metropolitan Museum, New York

ARTISTIC FULFILMENT

In these paintings—sea and sky, mountain and vale, and sometimes a lonely hut by the stream—have been used to tell the story of the great moments of life when a soul touched the infinite. Colors are used most sparingly and age has mellowed the color of the silk so that what has come down to us is a quiet study in browns with a touch here and there in a soft deep red, yellow, green, or white, with brown sometimes shading into a somber green. This is true except in flowers, but even these are subdued in colors.

Perhaps the two best-beloved painters of the later period were Ma Yüan and Hsia Kuei. They are certainly the two painters who have best succeeded in capturing the interest of present day lovers of Chinese painting in the West. Ma Yüan loved the towering, ragged mountain crags wrapped in windswept clouds. Anyone who has spent a summer in the Kuling mountain resort in the Yangtze Valley region will recognize a familiar atmosphere when he sees a Ma Yüan painting. This region of great moisture and strong wind creates often an atmospheric effect of great unreality and was, in later times, a favorite retreat for many artists. Hsia Kuei also loved the mountains, but his mountains are nearer home and there is nearly always the quietude of still waters in his dreamy, restful landscapes. Both of these masters lived at the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth century. Ma Yüan's brother and his son, Ma Lin, were also painters, but lacked the virility of the great master.

Of the eight hundred painters recorded from the Sung Dynasty, it is possible, in a short sketch, to mention only a few outstanding men. There was Kuo Hsi, known for his landscapes and for the perfect manner in which he educated his son who became a great connoisseur of art. There are the titles of one hundred and seven pictures by the great Li Lung-mien who in earlier years specialized in painting horses but gave it up after a Buddhist priest had told him to beware of the effect which such constant preoccupation might have on his future life. After that he gave himself up to the painting of Buddhist pictures.

Although landscape painting predominated during the Sung Dynasty, there were many painters who, like the famous Li Ti, specialized in



"THE POET." Attributed to Ma Yüan. Sung Dynasty
The Palace Museum, Peking

ARTISTIC FULFILMENT

decorative scrolls of birds and flowers. "With the Chinese," says Binyon, "a blossoming spray, subtly relieved and enhanced by the spacing of the design—the vacant space being as much a factor in its beauty as the thing drawn—becomes the subject of a masterpiece. It is not only a question of arrangement and color, though in these the Sung artists are unsurpassed, but of a radically different view of the world from that pervading the mind of Europe. Sensitiveness to natural beauty, combined with a sort of reverential tenderness for the life of things, inspired an art which concerned itself with things as they grew and exist for themselves, not as detached from their own life for the use of man. Flowers are not regarded as botanical specimens nor even as an ornament for rooms, cut and placed in pots, but as a symbol of the infinite life of nature."

The great commercial value of Sung paintings in our day has tended to a fetish worship of Sung art which obscures the fact that there must, of course, have been, even during the Sung Dynasty, a goodly number of mediocre painters, followers rather than leaders. It was no doubt this mediocre majority which, toward the end of the Sung Dynasty, began to show its deadening effect in conventionalized copies of greater masters.

Mi Fei, who lived towards the end of the Sung Dynasty, tried to stem this tide of crystallization by his impressionistic monochromes so closely related to the scholars' art of calligraphy and yet so strikingly alive, vigorous and independent. Mi Fei's impressionistic style introduced a movement which has ever since, even to our own day, come as a breath of life to periods of dried-up formulas and slavish adherence to traditional forms. It was an attempt to break the bonds of an art which had fallen into the hands of an amateurish, academic scholar group who had removed the sacred ark of Chinese painting into their hidebound camp. But the Confucian renaissance which came toward the end of the Sung Dynasty made the attempts of Mi Fei and those who followed him futile. As time went by the living personal experience which had been the dynamic in the Buddhist paintings of the T'ang era and the great Sung Dynasty landscapes, became replaced by

黑鳥食果圖



"BLACK BIRD AND FRUIT." *Attributed to Wu Ping. Sung Dynasty*
Metropolitan Museum, New York

ARTISTIC FULFILMENT

an intellectual system of stereotyped thinking. From now on Chinese painting, although retaining some of its outward beauty, became the symbol of an art which was spiritually dying.

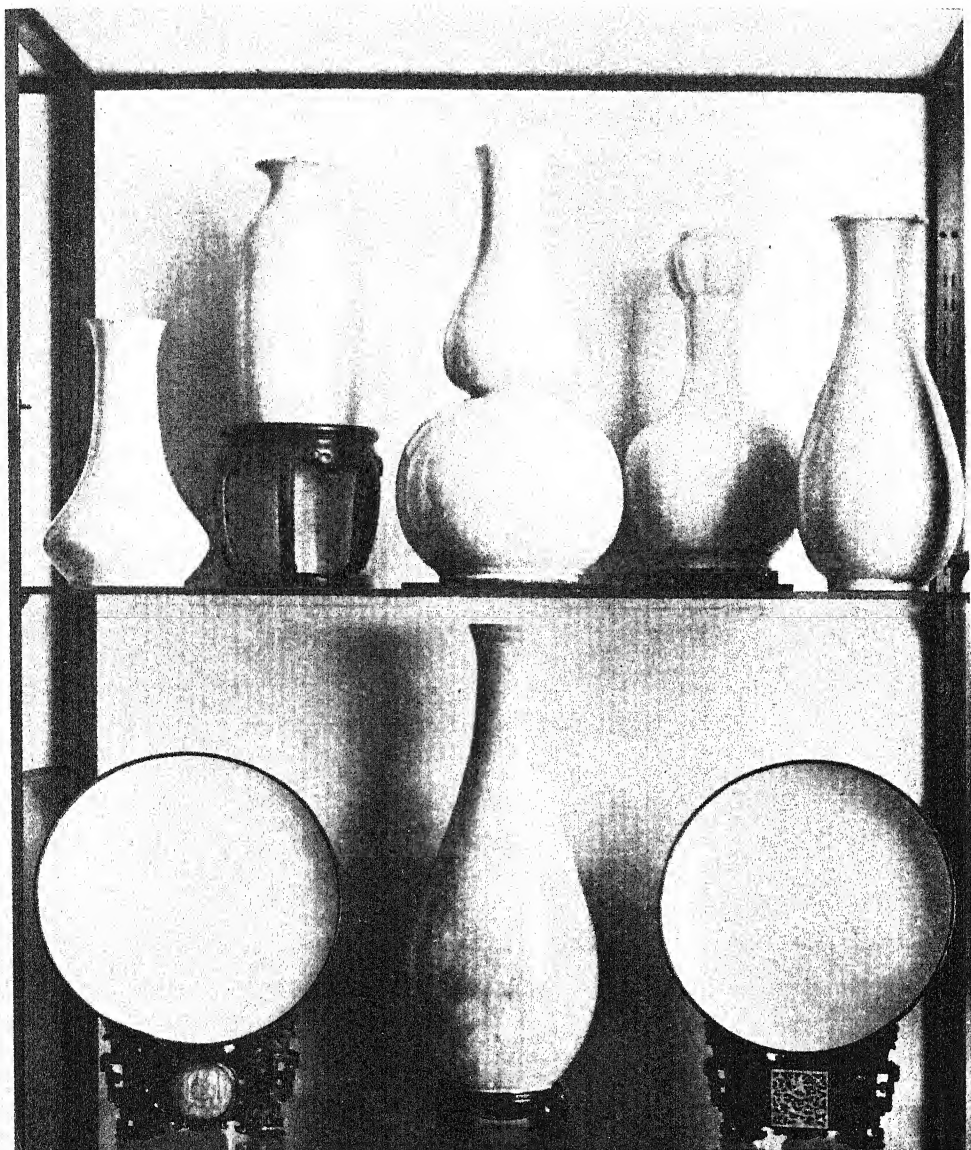
The Sung Dynasty in its subtlety of thought, its sophistication and esthetic susceptibilities, its high standards of living, and in its gentle emphasis on the amenities of life to which the perfect gentlemen and ladies of leisure gave all their time, made the cultivation of beauty for beauty's own sake a logical development, which is seen in objects of art with a purely decorative purpose.

Pottery making became a royal pastime. The leading kilns were subsidized by the emperor and their best output reserved for the court. The potters were even at times brought to the palace and ordered to produce something new or to perfect older forms. Each of the kilns had their own specialty and kept their process a carefully guarded secret.

Sung potteries are, almost without exception, monochromes, their beauty and importance dependent mostly upon form, color, and the finish of the glaze. They are either entirely undecorated or the design is carved, etched, moulded or appliquéd under the glaze, processes which were applied while the clay was still unfired.

The perfection to which the Sung potters carried the three aspects of form, color and finish, on which the success of their products depended, has never been excelled. It called for not only exceptional skill in the moulding and firing, but also in a keen artistic appreciation of color and form.

W. Burton in his authoritative book, *Porcelain, Its Nature, Art and Manufacture*, says: "The Chinese from a very early period had learned to fire their pottery at a much higher temperature than any one of their contemporaries in the West. It is difficult for anyone but a potter of wide practical experience to realize how varied are the colors that may be obtained from one mineral oxide or compound like oxide of iron or oxide of copper, the two prevalent minerals used in early Chinese ceramics according to the nature of the flux or glaze, the conditions of firing and the other compounds that are used in conjunction with the pure oxide. Oxide of iron, for instance, in different states of oxidation, with different



TING YAO POTTERIES, *Sung Dynasty*
Cleveland Museum

ARTISTIC FULFILMENT

fluxes or by addition of some oxide which itself yields no color may run through the most protean changes. It is possible to have yellow, buff, brown, drab, red, enamel color of many shades—all from oxide of iron. Dissolved in porcelain glazes it may give yellows, browns, and even certain bluish purple shades; while under certain conditions of firing it gave the famous greyish green porcelain known as Celadon. In the same way oxide of copper with a flux or glaze rich in lead gives various shades of green, but when it is dissolved in a glaze consisting of alkaline or earthy silicates, particularly in compounds rich in soda and lime, it produces all those wonderful blue-green tints which the potter calls turquoise. On the other hand, if the green or blue glazes obtained from copper oxide are fired in a 'reducing atmosphere,' the color changes to a marvelous red."

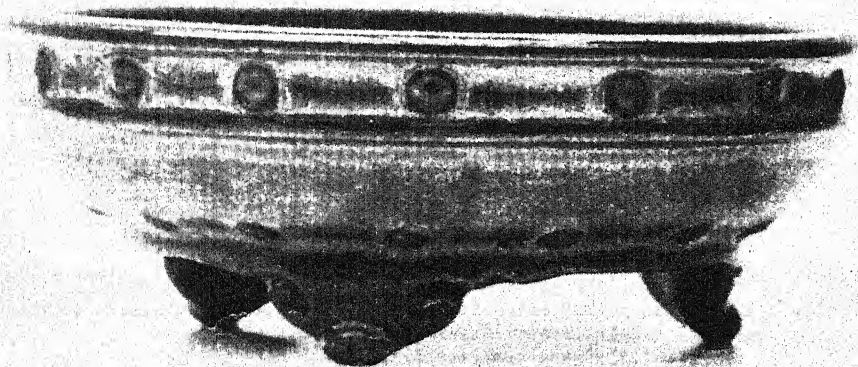
The Sung ware which has most in common with the European porcelain was produced by the Ting kilns. It is cream-colored with designs, incised or carved under the glaze, of the phoenix, emblem of the empress, lotus blossoms and leaves, the Buddhist symbol, and also peonies and children. The bowls and plates were often fired bottom upward and the delicate rims were left unglazed and afterwards mounted with copper or silver rims to preserve them from injury. This practice became later conventionalized in an occasional black glazed edge.

White is the color for mourning in China and Ting ware was used by the royal court during such periods. That it was also used by the people at large was made evident in the excavation of the city of Chilu which was inundated during the Sung Dynasty by one of the vagaries of the Yellow River when it changed its course. The Ting and Yin Ch'ing ware found in these houses and now exhibited in the historical museum in Peking show that very superior pottery was in daily use in the homes.

The Yin Ch'ing kilns in Kiangsi during the T'ang Dynasty made potteries which have the same thin, light characteristics of the later Sung ware, but changed in color from the dirty greyish brown of the T'ang period to an almost white porcelainous ware with a bluish tinge. The glaze is very even and gives at times almost a glassy impression. The decoration is suggestive of Ting ware. Many Yin Ch'ing pieces were



T'ZU CHOU BOWL. *Sung Dynasty*
Excavated in Chi-Lo-Hs'ien
Metropolitan Museum, New York



CHÜN YAU POTTERY. *Sung Dynasty*
Metropolitan Museum, New York

ARTISTIC FULFILMENT

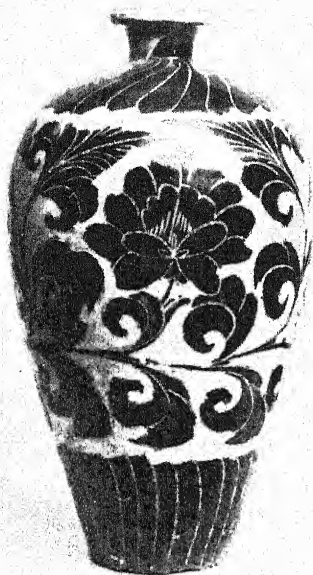
also, like Ting ware, fired upside down, leaving the rim unglazed, later to be protected with a metal band. T'ang Yin Ch'ing pieces, which are very rare, have sometimes appliqué masks used as ornamentation, suggestive of Greek theatrical masks.

Painted designs, so all important in later porcelains, were practically unknown during the Sung period. A few painted specimens have been found in the T'zu Chou potteries which also, more than any other Sung ceramics, show the Greek influence so prevalent in T'ang designs. The large and somewhat heavy T'zu Chou vases and jars come in several colors but more often in combinations of brown and buff or in natural shades with an occasional piece in near-monochrome.

The greyish green and green ware made by the Lung Chuan kilns and called Celadon by the West is, no doubt, the most popular Sung ware among European and American collectors. Its manufacture goes back to a very early time. Hobson suggests that the famous pre-T'ang *pi-sé*, or secret color, which may have been continued in the Yüe Chou bowls mentioned in the *Tea Classic*, may possibly have been early Celadon. The ornamentation on the Celadon ware is usually in slight relief, a flowery peony vine or two fishes in the bottom of the plates and bowls, symbolic of wedded happiness. The dragon is sometimes moulded in high relief on the side or forms the cover of the vase. The aim of the Lung Chuan potters was to imitate jade. In their experimentation to accomplish this they succeeded in producing a long range of subtle, restful shades of green and greyish green.

While most of the various Sung potteries have designs either carved, incised or appliquéd under the glaze, the Chün kilns depended entirely on color for their beauty. The forms and potting of the Chün ware are sometimes heavy; some pieces were evidently made as flower pots. The glaze of the Chün pottery is opalescent, ranging from dark blue and purple with red splashes, shading into a delicate turquoise blue. Purple is the lasting impression in most Chün ware, though there are also some exquisite pieces where the turquoise blue is predominant. It is a great favorite with Chinese collectors.

In describing Sung ware the Chinese always first mentions the prod-



T'ZU CHOU POTTERY. *Sung Dynasty*
Metropolitan Museum, New York



YIN CH'ING VASE. *Sung Dynasty*
(10th-13th century A.D.)
Metropolitan Museum, New York



CELADON VASE. *Sung Dynasty (960-1280 A.D.)*
The Lucy Maud Buckingham Collection
The Art Institute of Chicago

ARTISTIC FULFILMENT

ucts of the Ju, Kuan, Ko and Ting kilns. Products from the first three of these are very rare. An occasional single piece may be proudly shown by the owners of large Ting, Celadon, Chün and T'zu Chou collections. Kuan Yao was the imperial ware of the Sung Dynasty, and came in various colored monochromes. Ko Yao was distinguished by its heavy crackling; the principal color is said to have been pale purple or sometimes a bright yellow derived from antimony. I have never seen any of these colors in Ko Yao; the few pieces which go under that name in the West are usually a Celadon grey with the addition of a heavy crackle.

The elegant simplicity of the Sung ceramics gives the picture of a time when true nobility of taste was mated with a superb skill and technique. Discriminating artistic independence is indeed seen in all the art of this efflorescent period which marks the apex of China's artistic development.

Chinese history has, in a striking manner, moved in cycles. We considered the time of China's classical age at the time of Confucius and the school of philosophers which followed him, when she woke up to full consciousness of her power after the long winter of prehistoric dawn. Then followed the summer of ripe maturity and expansion during the Han Dynasty and the autumn and four-hundred-year winter of the Six Dynasties. Again came spring during the T'ang Dynasty, lyrical poetry, religious faith, great artists and growth along all lines, to be followed by the ripe, mature, beautiful summer of the Sung Dynasty. It had taken four thousand years of steady cultivation, under changing conditions, to produce the perfect blossom of Sung art.

PART THREE

THE AGE OF ARTISANS AND TRADERS

SHOPS AND MARTS



PAINTING. *Attributed to Ch'ien Hsüan, Yuan Dynasty (1260-1368 A.D.)*
Blossoming Shrubs and Plants, Birds and Butterflies
Freer Gallery, Washington, D. C.

XIII

CONQUERED CHINA

THE third epoch in China's artistic development is dominated by traditional reproduction. During the last five hundred years the only creative advance in Chinese art has been made in porcelain manufacture, distinctly an artisan's art, created by a commercial demand. While the reasons for this artistic inertia may be many, there are, at least in the first three centuries of this epoch, three obvious causes which must have been partly responsible for the artistic decline of the period.

Confucianism, which during the larger part of the first millennium of the Christian era had been eclipsed by Buddhism and Taoism, came toward the end of the Sung Dynasty again to the fore when the philosopher Chu Hsi greatly influenced China's religious and intellectual life. Chu Hsi's interpretation of the old classics, which has dominated Chinese thought down to the present day, came as a logical reaction to the more emotional and picturesque religions of Buddhism and Taoism which had led the Chinese people far away from the rational, balanced Confucian ideal.

The school of philosophy inaugurated by Chu Hsi may at best be said to have been, to begin with, a healthy effort to clear away superstitious animistic witchcraft and the meaningless mummary of Buddhistic ignorance. Ever since the day of Confucius, such movements had again and again come as a reaction to periods when emotional religion and witchcraft had had the upper hand.

In these, on the whole, beneficial movements of reaction in China's intellectual and religious life, the Confucian intellectuals seem, however, to have been incapable of satisfying the spiritual need of the mass of the people. In this shortcoming may be found an explanation for the

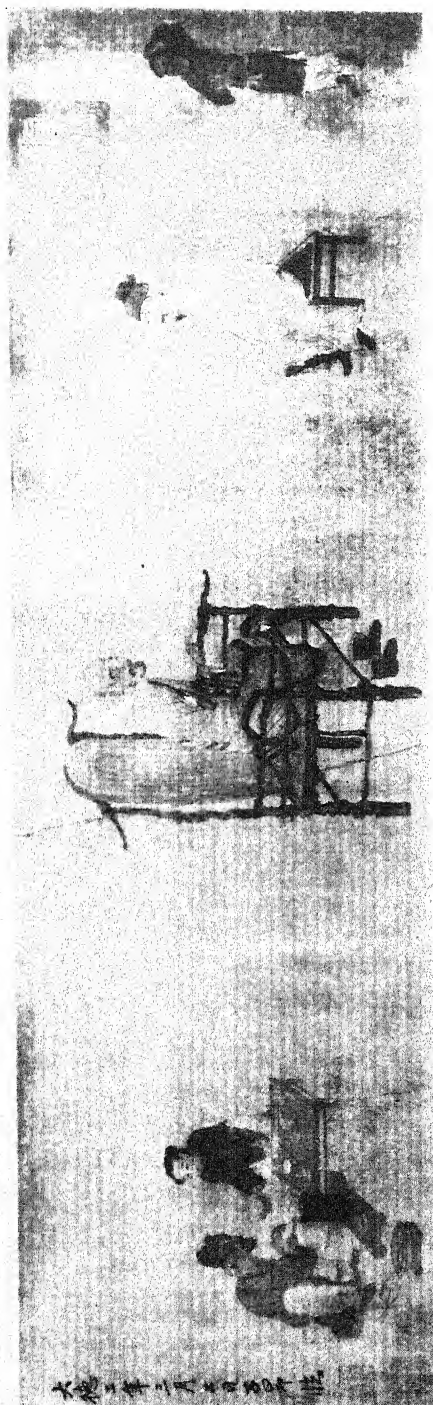
CONQUERED CHINA

strange fact that the Chinese people, in spite of their conservatism and innate insularity, so easily became followers of foreign cults and religions. Unable to follow their intellectual leaders into the realm of pure reason, and with a childlike desire for a religion more mystic and alive than the Confucian standards of ethical behavior and social expedencies, the mass of the people fell back on beliefs of magic and foreign cults and religions. Taoism, which started as a speculative philosophy with a scientific trend, became for the same reason, again and again, the hand-maiden of all sorts of magic and superstitious practices.

In formulating his system of rational thinking, Chu Hsi in the never-failing eclectic manner of his race utilized everything, at the same time explaining away that which did not fit. The tenets of both Taoism and Buddhism were read into the classics but have languished in the uncongenial atmosphere. Chu Hsi himself was undoubtedly a deeply religious man actuated by a sincere desire to aid the religious life of his time, but something was lacking. In his rigid system there was no place for the more or less anthropomorphic God which the unlettered mass had always demanded and always would demand. As time went by, Chu Hsi's Neo-Confucianism became a slavish academic following of set formulas and traditions which inevitably led to intellectual crystallization, spiritual atrophy and artistic stagnation.

The second cause for the artistic stagnation is more obviously found in the depressing, disheartening effect of the political disintegration which during the Sung Dynasty had reduced to a fraction the enormous Chinese Empire of the Han and T'ang periods. When in the thirteenth century the conquering armies of the Mongols appeared, China's resistance was broken and for the first time in her history the whole of China came under foreign domination. The Mongols, whose reign is known as the Yuan Dynasty, ruled China for nearly one hundred years and were finally ousted by the Nationalist Ming régime, but the spirit of conquest was then lost.

The Mongol occupation prepared indirectly the way for the European expansion which a century later ushered in the commercial era. This



THE PAINTER RECEIVING ANCIENT RUBBINGS FROM THE BUDDHIST MONK, DOU KU CH'ANG LAO

Attributed to Chao Meng-fu, Yuan Dynasty

Metropolitan Museum, New York

CONQUERED CHINA

era, as a third cause, profoundly affected China's artistic development, an era which will be described more fully in the following chapters.

In all the world's history there is not a more vivid, colorful chapter than that of the Mongol conquest. Mohammedanism had been an impenetrable barrier between the East and the West during the Sung Dynasty, but the Mongol conquests broke down the barrier, and for a short while Europe and China were brought into closer contact than during any preceding period.

Early in the fourteenth century Marco Polo, the Venetian traveler who in his teens had come to China with his father and uncle and had remained there for seventeen years, a trusted official and adviser to the great Kublai Khan, had prepared the way in Europe by his vivid descriptions of far-off Cathay.

John Masefield says somewhere: "The wonder of Marco Polo is this, that he created Asia for the European mind. When Marco Polo went to the East the whole of Asia so full of splendor and magnificence, so noisy with nations and kings, was like a dream in men's minds. Europeans touched only the fringe of the East. All that men knew of the East was that it was mysterious and that our Lord was born there."

There were many other Europeans at the court of Kublai Khan. Marco's father and uncle had been there before they went out with young Marco; but none of them would have set Europe on fire with curiosity to know more about the East. It was the fiery, vivid, observant and intensely human Marco Polo who made China a reality to his contemporary Europe; his accounts captivated Europe even long after his own day. His graphic descriptions of the material well-being of the Chinese came like a fairy tale to the people of Europe whose own standards of living at that time fell far below the standards of living of the Chinese as described by Marco Polo.

The picture he gives us of the country is one of great prosperity and affluence—smiling countrysides and large, rich cities teeming with people and busy with commerce. He tells about large caravans of merchants arriving at the court and how to his astonishment the Khan purchased all sorts of wonderful articles for the exchange of mere paper slips.



LOHANS AND ATTENDANTS

Style of Lu Hsin-Chung. Yuan Dynasty (About 1300 A.D.)

Havemeyer Collection

Metropolitan Museum, New York

CONQUERED CHINA

Paper money was a new thing to Marco. "From the city of Cambulue," he says, "there are many roads leading to the different provinces and upon each of these, at the distance of twenty-five or thirty miles according as the towns happen to be situated, there are stations with houses of accommodation for travelers. These are large and handsome buildings, having several well-furnished apartments hung with silk and provided with everything suitable to persons of rank. In the dominions no fewer than 200,000 horses are employed in the department of post and 10,000 buildings kept up."

The personality of Kublai Khan and his brilliant court completely captivated the Venetian's imagination and admiration.

His descriptions of the high-living, excessive drinking, barbaric splendor and the semi-nomadic character of the Mongol Court in Cambulue, the present Peking, brings out a marked contrast to the mellow, refined, sophisticated life in Kinsai, the present Hangchow, which had been the capital of the Southern Sung Dynasty, but to Marco Polo this contrast was evidently not obvious. In his description of Kinsai we get at last a more complete picture of the gentle refinement of life than the art treasures of the Sung period had led one to anticipate. Marco Polo's narrative gives the impression of a very large, exceedingly prosperous city where the amenities of life had developed far ahead of his contemporary Europe. He tells about twelve thousand bridges crossing the city's canal, of streets lined with houses "well built and richly adorned with carved work. So much do they delight in ornaments of this kind, in paintings and fancy buildings, that the sums they lavish on such objects are enormous." The occupants of these mansions he describes as "principals in manufactories who do not labor with their hands, but on the contrary assume airs of gentility and affect parade" with wives who "usually abstain from work, who have much beauty, dress in silks and jewelry scarce to be imagined and who have been brought up with delicate and languid habits."

When to this impression of affluence and refinement is added the part which Marco Polo did not observe, the Chinese philosophers and scholars, the painters, sculptors and poets, the Confucian halls of classical

CONQUERED CHINA

learning, the Buddhist temples and monasteries in the lovely hills around Hangchow, we have the picture of a time more advanced than anything the world had known before.

We wish he had told us more about China's cultural life at this time, about the great art traditions which the Mongols had taken over from the Sung Dynasty. But except for a casual reference to one or two places where potteries were being made and in his descriptions of architecture, he does not seem to have been impressed by the arts and letters of the "idolaters" around him.

A study of the invasions and conquests of the nomad tribes of Asia, in the East and in the West, shows that the invasions nearly always took place toward the declining end of a period. Political disintegration of the older civilizations seems to have given the nomad peoples their chance. Quite often they proved themselves to be able organizers who brought, for a while, order out of chaos, but in appropriating the culture of the older civilizations they prepared their own downfall. As time went by, the stamina and physical virility of the sons of the Steppe became effete and ineffective from luxury and soft living, and the conquered people succeeded thus in gradually eliminating the invaders. In all the history of these invasions I know of no instance where the invaders retained their original identity. If they remained, they became absorbed in the conquered nation, which often experienced a political renewal after the invaders had had their day.

The Mongols, true to type, failed to bring directly any new influences into the art of China. Religious sculpture, which during the Sung Dynasty had become more and more humanized, came during the Mongol régime almost to an end. Instead of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, one finds a number of Lohans or sages, holy and wise men. Mi Lo-Fu, the fat, materialistic-looking, jolly incarnation of Buddha, is often seen from this time.

Many of the Sung kilns closed down during the Mongol régime, and the imperial kilns at Ching Tê, which later became the great metropolis for pottery manufacture, were opened only when the court had to have its supply replenished. Yuan Chün ware can be distinguished from Sung

CONQUERED CHINA

by the bottom of the bowls which are unglazed and roughly finished. The slip is also heavier and the color less shaded and delicate than in Sung pieces. Similar deterioration can also be seen in Ting ceramics. The perfection of the Sung ceramics was never eclipsed or even approached by succeeding generations, although the following Ming period brought in new developments.

Painters in Northern Sung, who had continued under adversity the virile T'ang traditions, felt themselves more at home under the colorful new régime. The Mongol interruption brought to them a new impetus which is seen in greater freedom and vigor, especially in the brilliant works of Huang Kung-wang and Ni Tsan. Both of these artists followed T'ang traditions rather than Sung in their use of vivid colors, a type which no doubt made a greater appeal to the Mongols.

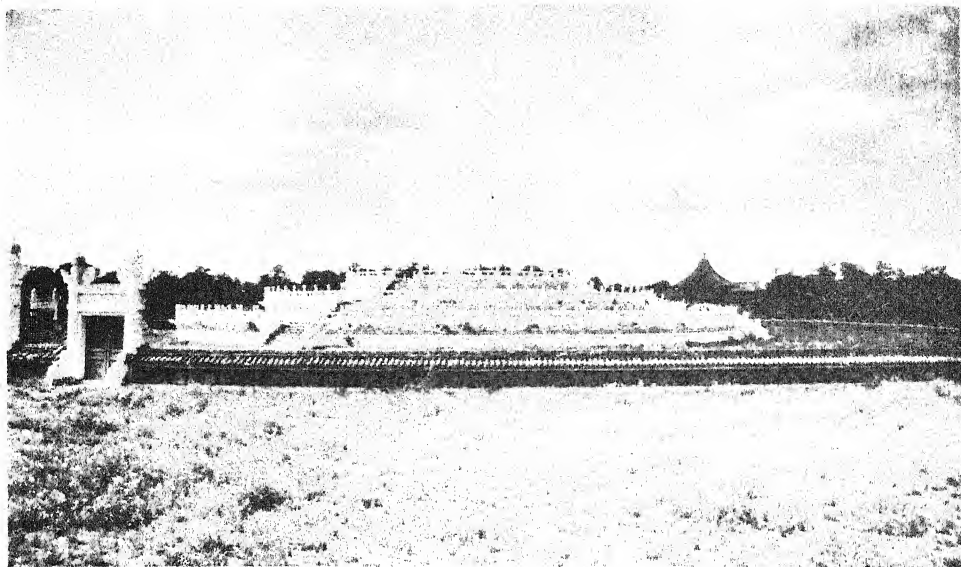
It is significant that the best-known painter of this period, Chao Meng-fu, though he also painted landscapes, flowers and birds, is most celebrated for his horses. The Mongols were horsemen, and wherever they appeared the horse was given due recognition. Chao Meng-fu, a descendant of the first Sung emperor, was early recognized by Kublai Khan, who gave him important official appointments. Although known all over the Empire for his calligraphy, his work was nevertheless, from all accounts, quite free from any academic formalism. Giles, quoting a Chinese writer, says, "He had all the suggestiveness of the T'ang period without its elaboration, all the masculinity of the Northern Sung without its lack of restraint." His paintings have been copied *ad infinitum*, so much so that nearly every half decent painting of horses from the Ming and early Ch'ing periods have been credited to Chao Meng-fu.

Ch'ien Hsüan painted landscapes and figures, but is best known for his flowers and birds done in the most perfect Sung manner. He, as well as Yen Hui, continued the best traditions of Sung, but their paintings have in addition a "quivering vitality," as Petrucci expresses it, which puts them in a class by themselves. Although adhering to the Southern School, there is an absence in the works of these Yuan masters of the vague dreaminess of the Southern School and in its place one is left with an impression of awakening life and awareness.

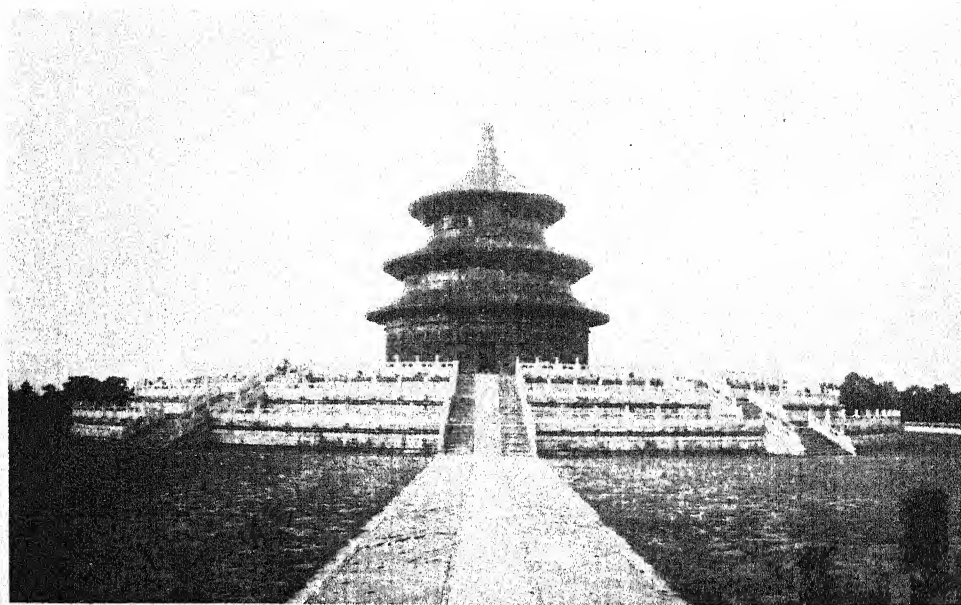
CONQUERED CHINA

The Southern School during the Yuan Dynasty produced many painters who in the plum blossom and bamboo found symbolic expression for spiritual realities. The plum blossom, gentle harbinger of spring, symbolized to these painters renewal of life, purity of heart and a sensitive appreciation of the life of the spirit, while the bamboo became symbolic of strength and endurance, of continuity in a world of change. The high priestess of this school was Lady Kuan, wife of Chao Meng-fu, who published a treatise called *The Bamboo in Monochrome*, still considered a valuable and authoritative work.

The Indian Summer which the painters of the Mongol period had ushered in did not, however, stop the life-consuming processes of academic formalism. Conformity and tradition, the two dangers which always threatened the life of China's pictorial art, were again at work. With few exceptions, Chinese painting during the following centuries became largely occupied with reproducing the past.



ALTAR OF HEAVEN, PEKING
First Built During the Ming Dynasty (1403-1425 A.D.)



TEMPLE OF HEAVEN, PEKING
First Built During the Reign of Yung Lo. Ming Dynasty (1403-1425 A.D.)

XIV

MING NATIONALISM

SECRET societies have ever profoundly affected China's political life. During the Mongol régime a network of such subterranean activities caused at last a general conflagration of discontent. The leader who finally came to the fore in a great national uprising against the Mongol tyrants, an uprising not so unlike that which overthrew the Manchu régime in 1911, was a Buddhist priest by the name of Chu Yuan-chang, who as an orphan child had sought shelter in a Buddhist monastery. After successfully putting the Mongols to flight, he ascended the Dragon Throne in 1368 and under the name of Hung Wu became the first emperor of the Ming Dynasty.

Unhampered by any class distinction, the Heavenly Mandate of the ruling house, in which the Chinese firmly believed, was repeatedly given to men of humble origin who by striking personalities, ability and leadership had won the confidence of their followers during critical periods. Thus was injected time and time again new vitality into a decaying ruling house. The periods of anarchy, of storm and stress, which inevitably seem to separate the great periods in Chinese history, were often actually periods of renewal when the discontented voice of the people, expressed in the activities of the secret societies, brought about the needed change.

The barbaric splendor of the Mongol capital in Peking was not to the taste of the former priest, who established his court in great simplicity in Nanking. Only the gates of this Ming city and Hung Wu's tomb are left today to remind the present Nationalist Government of the last time Nanking was China's capital. Sun Yat-sen, founder of the present Nationalist movement, is buried within sight of the tomb of this Nationalist leader of five hundred years ago.

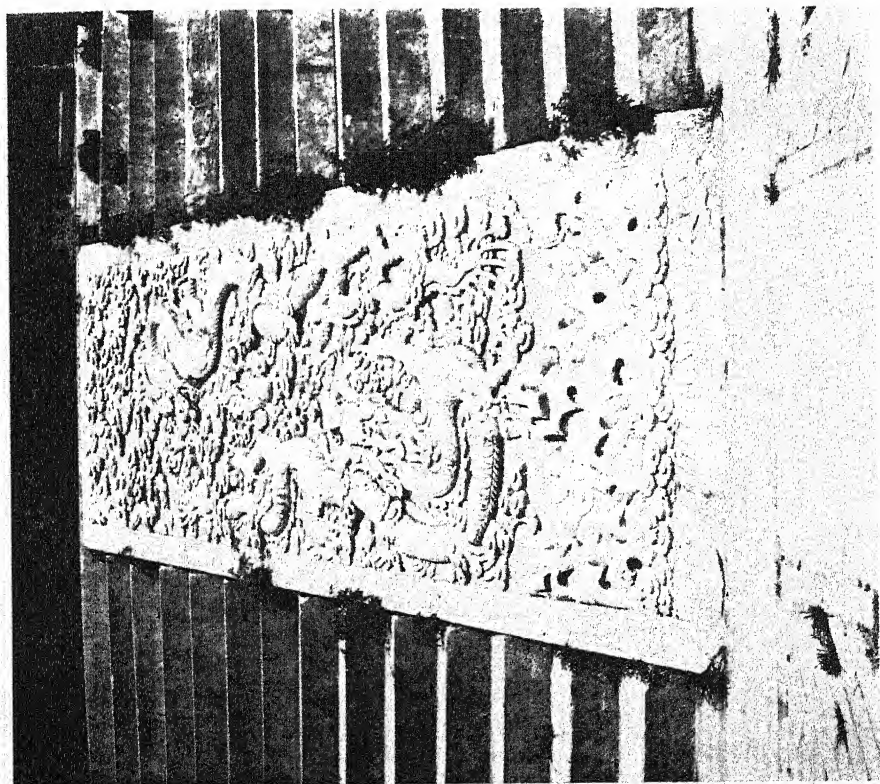
MING NATIONALISM

The successful administration of the first Ming emperor, which lasted for thirty years, was ably continued by his son, Yung Lo. It was during this emperor's reign that the capital was moved back to Peking. During the reign of Hung Wu, Peking was still a storm center, the Mongols trying for a number of years to recapture their old stronghold.

The history of Peking is, to a large extent, bound up in the history of China's Northern invaders. Legends about a city on the site of the present Peiping go back to the Emperor Shun about 2000 B.C., but historically it does not enter until it became the capital of the Yen kingdom in the first millennium B.C. For centuries Peking went through various vicissitudes until it was conquered by the Liao Kitans, a Tartar tribe from the North, in 936 A.D. The Kitans called it first Nanching (Southern Capital) because they had an earlier capital farther north, but this name was changed to Yenching (The Swallow Capital). Another tribe, the Chins, drove out the Kitan Tartars, and it was their capital extending southwest of the present city that was conquered by the Mongols in 1213.

The Mongol hordes who entered the old Yenching set fire to the palaces, which burned for a month. But Kublai Khan, who became ruler in 1260, and who had already come under the subtle influence of Chinese culture, restored the old capital. In his second year the ancient city was repaired, but this was later given up for greater plans. In 1268 the present city was laid out north of the old capital, a square measuring twenty miles. The city was called Tan Tu (The Great Capital) or Cambulue (the City of the Great Khan).

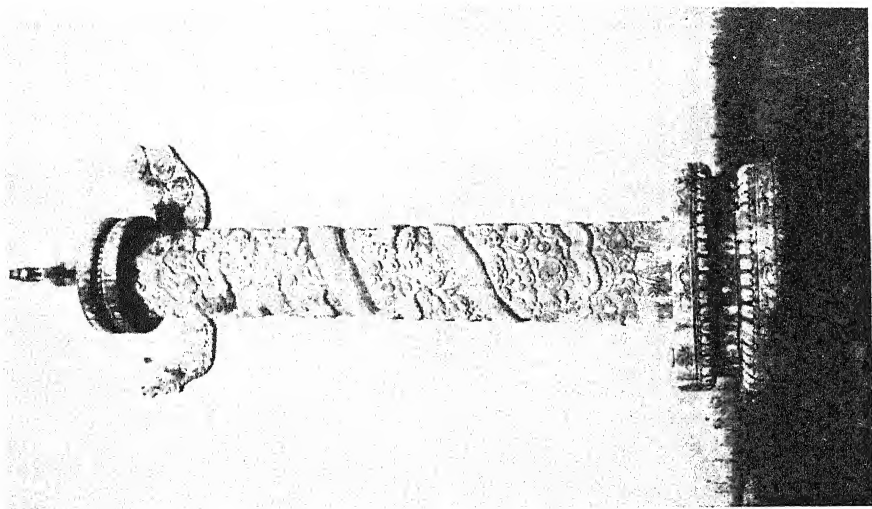
The Northern invaders, the Mongols and their predecessors, as well as the later Manchus, made Chinese architecture quickly their own. Whether in it were found features reminiscent of their own background or whether it was only the natural appeal that vigorous, warm, bright colors have always made to people from the bleak, cold, wintry North, we do not know. Excavations in Central Asia in various places have brought to light architectural material with a marked resemblance in ornamentation and coloring to material in Chinese architecture, simi-



THE SPIRIT WALK

Over Which the Emperor's Chair Was Carried. Carved Stone. Peking

PHOTO: YAMAMOTO, PEKING



CARVED COLUMN, IMPERIAL INSIGNIA, PEKING

MING NATIONALISM

larities which may be accounted for by Buddhist influences in both places.

Marco Polo brims over with enthusiasm in his account of the grandeur of the palaces of the Grand Khan. "The palace of the Grand Khan," he tells us, "is the most extensive that has ever been known. It has no upper floors but the roof is very lofty. The paved foundation on which it stands is raised ten spans above the level of the ground, and a wall of marble, two paces wide, is built on all sides—so that the wall, extending beyond the ground plan of the building, serves as a terrace where those who walk on it are visible from without. Along the exterior edge of the wall is a handsome balustrade with pillars, which the people are allowed to approach. The sides of the great halls and the apartments are ornamented with dragons in carved work and gilt, figures of warriors, of birds, and of beasts with representations of battles. The inside of the roof is contrived in such a manner that nothing besides gilding and painting presents itself to the eye. The exterior of the roof is adorned with a variety of colors, red, green, azure and violet, and the sort of covering is so strong as to last for many years."

Whatever was left of these grand palaces when the capital was moved back to Peking, the Ming emperor, Yung Lo, took over. Many buildings had been destroyed, but one at least still stands to corroborate Marco Polo's description. The city plan of Peking as it is today, developed on a central axis leading up to the main gates of the city, with the imperial palaces in the center, is still as planned by Yung Lo in the fifteenth century. The imperial "Forbidden City" in the center with its golden tiled roofs, its numerous palaces, large open spaces for great assemblies, its parks and artificial lakes, intimate courtyards, marble terraces and gay decorations, is, without exception anywhere at any time, the most colorful, artistic group of buildings in the world.

Chinese architecture shows a singular absence of evolution and change. The general orderliness of arrangement and attention to an axis throughout, "frankness of construction," making the beams and pillars not only constructional features but ornamental assets as well, the upturned roof



PALACES IN THE FORBIDDEN CITY, PEKING
PHOTO: YAMAMOTO, PEKING



AVENUE OF STONE WARRIORS. MING TOMBS NEAR PEKING

MING NATIONALISM

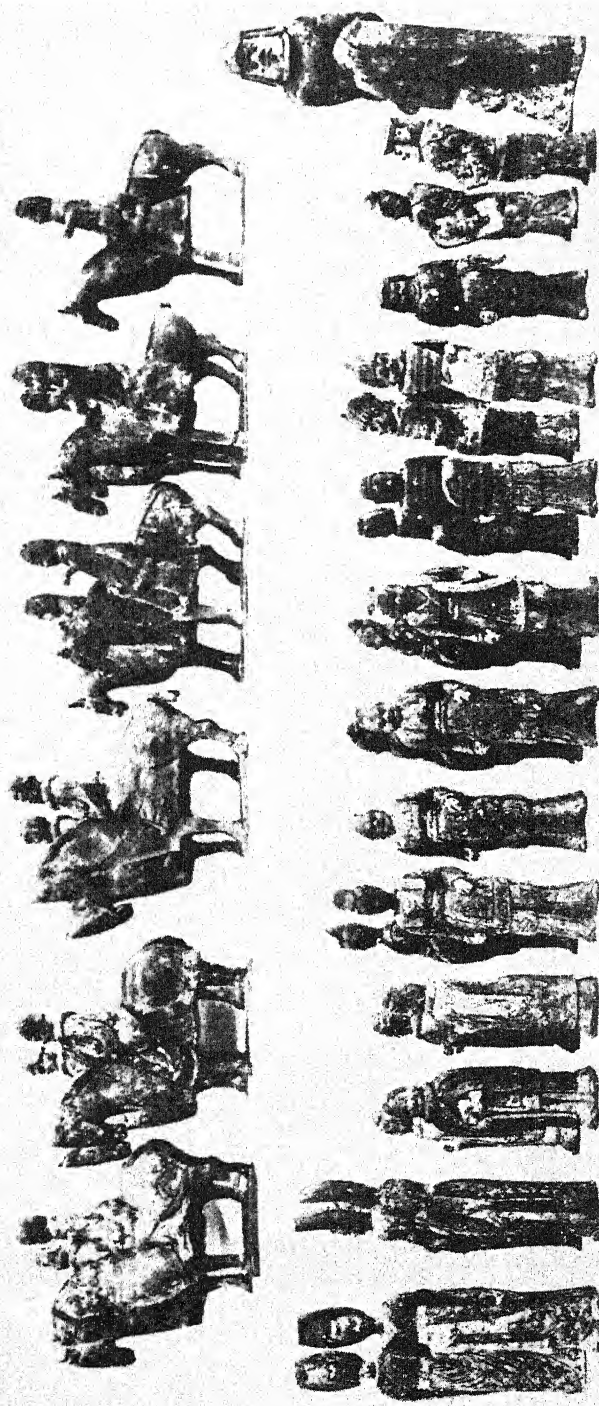
corners and the lavish use of color both in paint and tiles are four characteristics that can be observed in the earliest buildings extant as well as in the present day architectural renaissance.

While three of these characteristics, the orderliness of arrangement, the frankness of construction and, to a degree, the upturned roof corners, have from early times to the present day been used in the architecture of well-to-do homes, the lavish use of color both in painting and tiles and the raised platform on which the palaces and temples were often built have remained features peculiar to religious and imperial architecture.

In the city of Taiku in the province of Shansi among the ruins of a once magnificent residence there is, on one of its walls, a tablet on which the man who built the house denounces himself a fool in no uncertain terms. The story goes that after being an official in Peking this wealthy Shansi banker returning to his native city built himself a mansion in which he copied some of the imperial architecture in Peking. When this came to the ears of his royal masters he was fined an enormous amount of money for his insolence and was furthermore compelled to put up the tablet on which he calls himself a fool. By the time the fine had been paid he could no doubt put up the tablet with a good deal of sincerity.

Siren, in his work on Chinese architecture, gives two possible clues to the origin of the raised terrace which was particularly noticed by Marco Polo. First, the natural terracing that was used for cultivating the hilly North where the Chinese race probably originated. The loess soil, peculiar to all of North China, lends itself particularly to such terracing. In Shansi province, where terracing is still used extensively, the houses, often flat-roofed, seem sometimes completely a part of the terrace. It is not impossible that they may have evolved from much earlier cave dwellings.

Another origin for the terrace may be found in the early religious significance of the altar. "These altars," says Sirèn, "were in older times simply mounds or terraces of mud near the home, on which sacrifices were performed. Gradually these altars were developed into stone-built



GLAZED FUNERARY FIGURES
Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto
Sirèn, History of Early Chinese Art

MING NATIONALISM

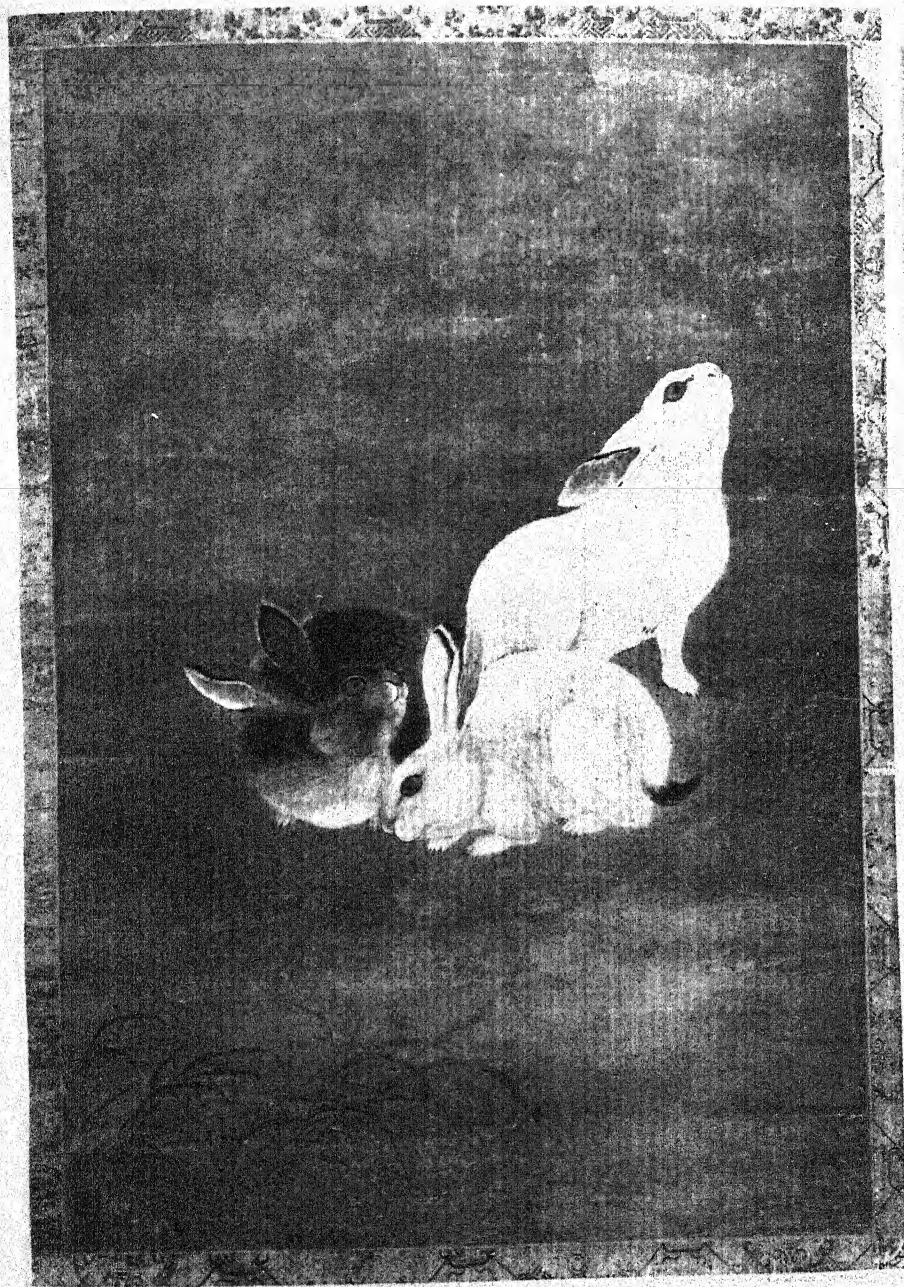
platforms adjacent to the residences of ruling princes or those who had the right of offering sacrifices to the great divinities of nature. In later times when these rights were transferred to the one great ruler, the Son of Heaven, the altar dedicated to the spirits and gods of nature became attached to the Imperial Palaces."

The Altar of Heaven in Peking, built during the reign of Yung Lo in 1420 and several times restored since then, is the most sublime illustration of this religious idea expressed in Chinese architecture. At the winter solstice, about Christmas time, the emperor performed here the great annual ceremonies. With fasting and prayer he presented himself before Heaven. Kneeling under the open sky he confessed his shortcomings of the past year. If national calamities had come to the people, it was his duty to see if any evil in his own life had caused Heaven's displeasure.

The altar is built of white marble in three terraces, the first 210, the second 150, and the third 90 feet wide. The balustrades of the three terraces total 360, which is the number of days in the Chinese lunar year. The whole structure was erected with careful attention to old beliefs. The sacred number nine is used in various combinations and the carvings on the marble balustrades reflect the old magical beliefs.

Within the three and a half mile wall surrounding the extensive grounds are other temples dedicated to different ceremonies. The most important of these is the Temple of Heaven with blue tiled roofs and three tiers of marble balustrades. In this building the Emperors offered their annual prayers for a prosperous and happy year on the first day of the Chinese New Year. The ceremony began before dawn when the intercessory prayer for a good harvest was read by an official from the Board of Rites, accompanied by ceremonial dances, music and sacrifices.

As a result of research in the Ancient Ceremonies, the Altar of Agriculture was rebuilt during the reign of Cha Ch'ing in the sixteenth century. It is dedicated to Shên Nung, the mythical emperor in Chinese legendary lore, who personifies the invention of agriculture. This Altar stands within a smaller enclosure not far from the Temple of Heaven. The emperor, as the first husbandman of the land, performed here on



"THREE RABBITS"

Style of Kung Chi. Northern Sung School. Ming Copy

Havemeyer Collection

Metropolitan Museum, New York

MING NATIONALISM

the first day of the second period of spring, assisted by princes of the royal house and high officials, ceremonies to the God of the Soil, by turning three double furrows with his own hand, a ceremony deeply significant to a people who even today has eighty per cent of its population on the farms. These ceremonies, both at the Altar of Heaven and the Altar of Agriculture, have been discontinued since the establishment of the Republic.

Some of the best sculpture from the Ming Dynasty is seen in the "Spirit Walk," a carved slab of marble or stone in front of temples and palaces with steps on both sides, over which the Emperor's chair was carried. The sculpture on the marble balustrades, on the tall decorative columns—royal insignias—and on the spirit screens that warded off evil influences also show fine workmanship from this period. The designs are usually conventionalized, but the inherited traditions had such a wealth of material that one is forever meeting the unexpected around the corners of the constantly interrupted vistas.

Funerary customs continued also their time-honored traditions although the art has become lifeless and heavy. The avenue of stone animals and figures leading up to the Ming Tombs near Nanking and Peking are monuments to a live tradition and a dead art, an art made by artisans who copied old forms but failed to capture the spirit which gave life even to the conventionalized monsters of old.

The same is to a large extent true of the pottery figures found in the graves. The remarkable Toronto Museum collection of grave ceramics contains a large collection of Ming grave figures, sets of a hundred or more found in a single grave. They represent a monotonous parade of uniform figures, devoid of charm, heavy and lifeless in spite of superior workmanship in throwing and glazing.

The art of the Ming Dynasty was to a large extent typical of the political reconstruction of the time. It wanted and attempted to reproduce the past. What it added came more often by way of ornamentation rather than as an original creation. This is best seen in the decorative ornate bronzes of this time.

Although in painting independent creative work was done, especially



"DUCKS AND LOTUS"

Attributed to Chou Ch'uan (1630-1650 A.D.)

Havemeyer Collection

Metropolitan Museum, New York

MING NATIONALISM

of the decorative type, by Lin Liang and Tung Ch'i-ch'ang and others, the long list of twelve hundred painters from this period found more often artistic satisfaction in copying the early masters; a certain Chekiang school specialized even in copying only Ma Yuan of the Sung Dynasty. Many of the paintings attributed today to Sung masters were no doubt produced by these Ming painters, many of whom did excellent work, though lacking in creative inspiration.

As a refreshing relief from this traditional reproduction, there appears sporadically from the Ming period impressionistic paintings of realism, full of life and meaning. There is a splendid example of this art in Tai Chin's delightful "Breaking Waves and Autumn Winds," which is in the Freer Gallery in Washington. T'ang Yin's landscape in the Imperial Palace Museum in Peking, while not expressing the exceptional movement in Tai Chin's painting, also shows a great deal of originality, feeling and life.

This was a movement which, if it had won the day, might have injected new life and spirit into a dying art. But as the bourgeois spirit which had its hold on China at this time became more pronounced, a noticeable change can be seen. The distant, cloud-wrapt mountains come nearer home. Instead of the lonely wanderer and the pilgrim toiling up the mountainside to the distant shrine, one finds fat, contented burghers, gracious ladies, royal assemblies, rollicking, jolly children and peaceful birds and flowers—all very homelike, domestic and safe. The logical further step in this picturing of everyday life was to express it in cheerful, rich colors. So we find in later Ming paintings vivid green shading into deeper blue, with the human figure outlined in various hues: a sharp contrast to the dreamy monochromes and almost colorless otherworldly paintings of the Sung era. The natural gregariousness of the Chinese fitted splendidly into this cheerful conception of life. The painters of this period revel in great outdoor pageantries, glorified picnics with masses of minutely, often excellently drawn, human figures.

In expressing their appreciation of material comfort and joys, some of the later Ming painters made a distinct contribution to China's pic-



"SEA AND SKY AT SUNRISE"
Style of Li Chao-Tuo. Tang Dynasty
Inscribed by Chao Po-Chü (1127-1162 A.D.) Ming Copy
Hartmeyer Collection
Metropolitan Museum, New York

MING NATIONALISM

torial art in their highly colored, cheerful representations of contemporary life. Ming paintings express the pendulum's inevitable swing from the lofty heights of spiritual withdrawal and solitude back to human contacts and the security of common life.

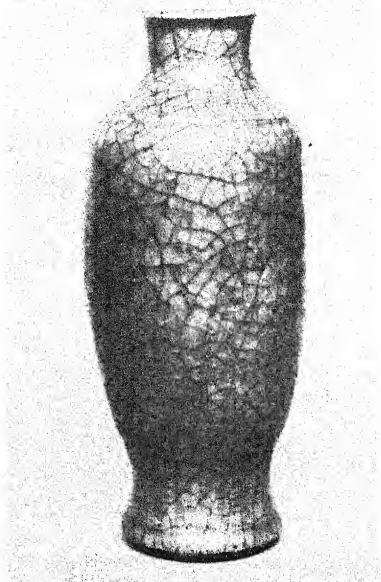


PAINTING. *Attributed to Tai Chin (Middle 15th century) "Breaking Waves and Autumn Winds"*

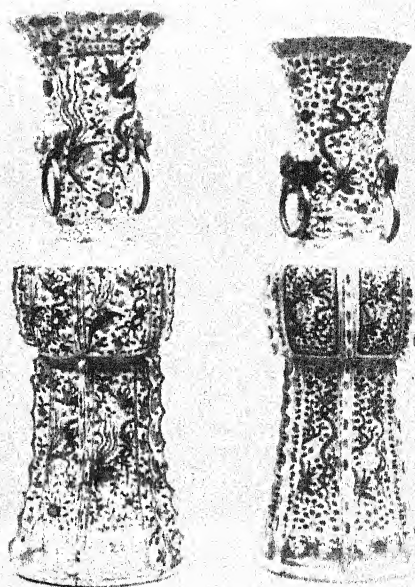
Section of Scroll. Ming Dynasty Freer Gallery, Washington, D. C.



TWO SECTIONS OF LANDSCAPE. *Attributed to T'ang Yin. Ming Dynasty (1568-1644 A.D.)*
The Palace Museum, Peking



CRACKLE WARE VASE. Ming Dynasty
Metropolitan Museum, New York



PORCELAIN VASES. Ming Period
Wan Li (1573-1619 A.D.)
Metropolitan Museum, New York



POTTERY JAR. Blue Ground, Raised Vari-colored
Decorations. Ming Dynasty
Metropolitan Museum, New York



PORCELAIN JAR
Early Ming Period (15th century A.D.)
Metropolitan Museum, New York

XV

THE EUROPEAN EXPANSION AND CHINA

THE founders of the Ming Dynasty had the wisdom to retain enough of the splendid organization of the Mongols to secure an early success. When to this was added the new spirit of nationalism and the social and educational reforms and improvements of the early Ming emperors, the general impression was one of prosperity and progress. The period was lacking in originality and spiritual independence both in art and literature, but this deficiency was covered up by a restful bourgeois self-satisfaction which expressed itself in a great many activities that on the surface looked like progress. The insularity of the Ming period was a natural reaction from the Mongol conquest with its feeling of national disgrace and repression. China had had more than enough of the excitement of entertaining extravagant uninvited foreign guests, and was settling down in great content for a time of rest and quiet behind her own walls. The Chinese individual has a rare gift for finding relaxation and pleasure in the commonplace, and nations as much as individuals seem to need such periods. In its domesticity, propriety and self-satisfaction one might call the Ming period a Victorian Age, if that hackneyed phrase had not come to mean so many things.

It was at any rate this spirit of utter self-centered complacency which prevented China from having a greater share in the commercial expansion which Europe at this time was passing through. The discovery of America and subsequent exploration of new sea routes ushered in an era in Europe's international relationships which opened up new interests and brought a new vision to Europe's old countries.

China's expansion had come much earlier, not across the sea, but over Asia's highways and desert sands, when, during the Han and T'ang

THE EUROPEAN EXPANSION AND CHINA

dynasties, to defend herself against the Tartar impact, she had ventured farther and farther west and there found new lands and civilizations and new roads for travel and commerce. But when, after the T'ang period, the Mohammedans blocked the land way between Asia and Europe, it was the navigators who finally brought Europe to South China.

The Portuguese came first; as early as 1537 there were four of their port settlements in Canton. The earlier Portuguese traders were rough fellows who raised much disorder in the ports of South China. They finally settled themselves on the sea coast at Macao near Canton where their descendants still are. The Spaniards who followed the Portuguese were military men and religious fanatics. They made little headway with an old civilization such as existed in China and soon went to the Philippines where their history is none too attractive. Whatever can be said, however, against the motives and methods of these early buccaneers, one cannot but admire their daring spirit and enterprise which made them find their way over the trackless sea. Even with commercial and more sordid incentives, there was a spirit of adventure abroad at this time which broke down old traditions and brought into age-old Europe a spirit of romance and youth. Had China but caught a little of this spirit, her subsequent history might have been different.

The Portuguese and Spaniards were followed by the Dutch and English. The objective of both of these was commercial intercourse rather than conquest. This was carried on at Canton under the most unpleasant and humiliating conditions for the foreigner, but any insult was tolerated so long as the Chinese permitted trade.

After the traders came missionaries offering Europe's cultural and religious products. Some of these early missionaries, like Matteo Ricci, were learned men and introduced the Chinese to modern science and the history of Western countries. Their learning was quickly recognized and appreciated, but when theological disputes arose and matters of ritual and faith were arbitrarily settled by the Pope in far-off Rome, the welcome was withdrawn.



PORCELAIN JAR
K'ang Hsi Period (1662-1723 A.D.)
The Palace Museum, Peking



PORCELAIN VASE
Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 A.D.)
The Palace Museum, Peking



PORCELAIN BOWL. Early Ch'ing Dynasty
Metropolitan Museum, New York



CLOISONNE ENAMEL VASE ON COPPER
Ming Period (1368-1643 A.D.)
Metropolitan Museum, New York

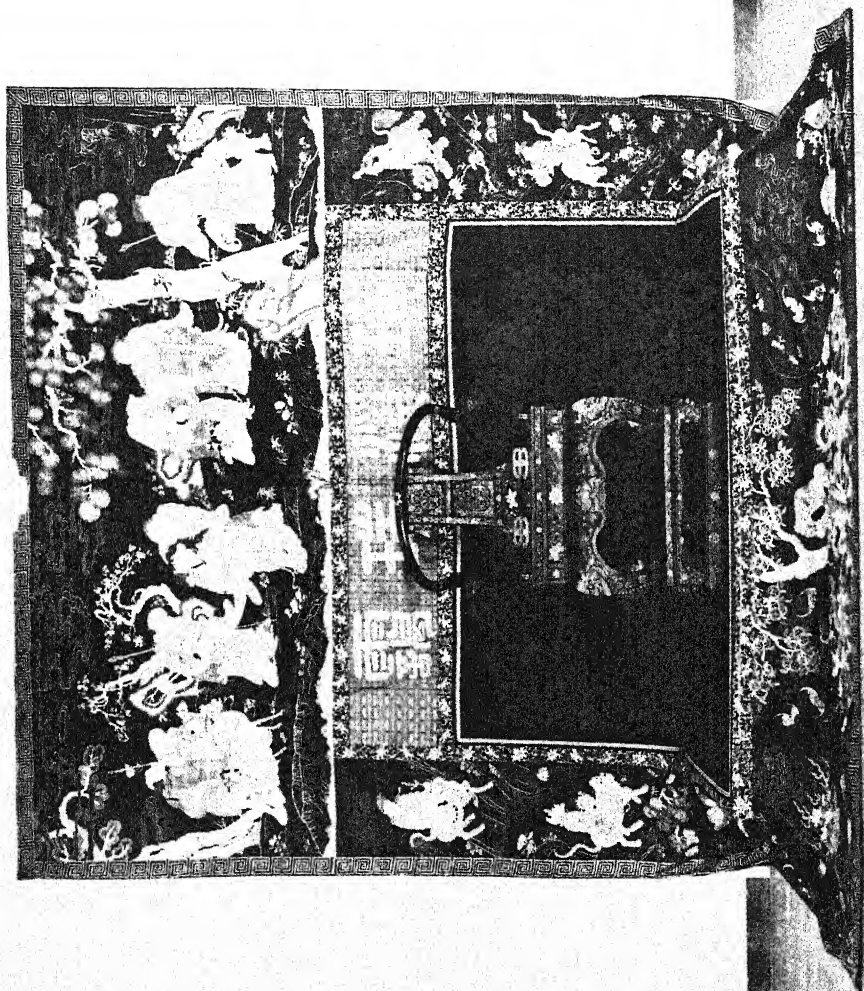
THE EUROPEAN EXPANSION AND CHINA

From this time China entered on an entirely new chapter in her history, a chapter for which she was wholly unprepared. She knew the ruthless barbarians from the North who had conquered her again and again, only to be conquered in their turn by the invincible Chinese civilization. Her traders had carried precious goods across the desert sand to far-off Rome and intervening points, but always with no risk to China's integrity, but these commercial barbarians who came in their boats from unknown lands across the sea created a new and very difficult problem.

China at this time knew little about the geography of Europe. Laufer, in an article in the *Journal of American Oriental Society*, has translated a passage from *Ming Shi*, a Chinese history of the Ming Dynasty, which runs as follows: "Italy is a country situated in the great western ocean. In times of old it had no intercourse with China. A man of this country, Li Matou by name (Matteo Ricci, the first Jesuit missionary to China) arrived at the capital in the period Wan-li (1573-1621) and displayed a map of the ten thousand countries, explaining that there are in the world five great continents. The first of these is called A-si-a (Asia) with more than a hundred countries, of which China is the first. The second is Ou-lo-pa (Europe), the third Li-wei-ya (Libya, the old name for Africa). The fourth is Amo-li-kia (America), vast in extent and divided into a northern and southern continent which however are connected with each other." This was great news to the Chinese.

Thanks to Marco Polo's publicity work Europe at this time was better prepared for the many new contacts with China which came after the fifteenth century.

When Columbus tried to find a new way across the blue waters to China, and incidentally discovered America, he had with him a Latin translation of Marco Polo's travels. His great interest and admiration for the Venetian traveler is shown by the fifty-four marginal notes and observations in this copy which is now in Spain in the library in Seville. The wonders of far-off Cathay were the dynamics in Columbus's enterprise. When he found the West Indian Islands he believed that he had reached Japan and he quite naturally concluded, when he later reached



TEXTILES AND LACQUER. *Manchu Period*

PHOTO: COURTESY MUSEUM OF FAR EASTERN ANTIQUITIES, STOCKHOLM

THE EUROPEAN EXPANSION AND CHINA

the mainland of the American continent, that at last he had arrived in Marco Polo's Cathay. If Columbus, by his discovery of the Western hemisphere, started the European expansion which ushered in our modern civilization, Marco Polo should be given the honor place as its first publicity man. His vivid descriptions of far-off Cathay filled Europe with dreams of adventure; dreams that were later realized far beyond the wildest dreams.

After the discovery of America and the new sea routes, Europe entered upon a period of unprecedented prosperity. Precious metals and raw-stuffs poured in from new-found lands clamoring for channels of distribution. New needs and extravagances had to be, and were easily, created and the overloading and artificialities of the Baroque and Rococo periods in Europe came as an answer to this need. It was into this *nouveau riche* Europe that Chinese elegance and esthetic refinements in the form of porcelain, silks, embroideries, wallpaper and many other articles came as a heaven-sent revelation. *Chinoiserie* became the fad and fancy of a Europe hungry for new sensations.

The Chinese sedan chair was exported to Europe and became extremely popular; even Chinese regulations and permits for carrying were adopted by European potentates and aristocrats. After a while a European craftsman had the brilliant idea of putting wheels on the sedan chair and the chaise was born.

The importation of Chinese lacquer caused the development of an extensive French industry which faithfully copied Chinese designs. The craze for oriental designs spread to the silk industry, and European silk manufacturers had to produce Chinese designs in order to find a market for their products. Chinese designs can be found in almost every branch of Europe's industrial art from the seventeenth century onward. Even Chinese architecture was copied in exotic pleasure houses and garden embellishments. Many of these European adaptations of Chinese designs were caricatures of the originals; amusing mistakes were made with interesting parallels in the attempts made today by the Chinese to copy Western art.

THE EUROPEAN EXPANSION AND CHINA

Although the full flow of this European passion for things Chinese did not come until the Ming Dynasty had come to an end in the seventeenth century, the foundation for its advent was laid in the emphasis which the Ming period placed on the art of everyday life—a characteristic which has a striking parallel in the contemporary European Rococo period with its love for the decorative accessories of life.

The most far-reaching effect of the European demand for *Chinoiseries* at this time came in porcelain manufacture. Ching Tê Chen in the province of Kiangsu, the metropolis for porcelain manufacture during the Ming period, had been founded during the Sung Dynasty. Not far from the new capital at Nanking, it was given new importance during the Ming Dynasty.

The region around Ching Tê abounded in the raw materials for porcelain manufacture, and its nearness to waterways which made transportation easy added to the importance of the place. For several centuries Ching Tê continued to turn out quantities of porcelain from the imperial and private factories, objects for export as well as for home consumption.

Hobson tells us that of the twenty-three departments in the imperial factories, four were concerned with decorations and a fifth with the marks and seals. One would expect in such a mass production that individual artistic initiative would lose out, but this does not seem to have been the case. A new development is seen in the increased use of porcelain with the designs painted in blue. Most of the cobaltiferous ore of manganese used to produce the blue in Ming porcelains came from Persia, but some was also found in the neighborhood of Ching Tê, though of inferior quality. The native inferior blue accounts for the greyish tone which can be observed in early blue Ming ware. In the following period, by careful experimentation, splendid results were obtained with native material.

A new development is also seen in a decorative type with the ornamentation appliquéed, sometimes in high relief and glazed in contrasting colors. It is a heavy type which found its most barbaric expression in the large bowls, vases, and garden seats made in Shekwan near Canton. As Canton was the leading port for the European commercial contacts,

THE EUROPEAN EXPANSION AND CHINA

this type was perhaps created to cater to the taste of the European "barbarians."

The perfection of the Sung monochrome ceramics was never attained by the Ming potters but a great deal was nevertheless made. Old forms made in bronze were reproduced in porcelain and the design is sometimes, as in the Sung potteries, engraved under the glaze. These designs had been preserved, says Hobson, in old brocades and were to a large extent the same designs which from time immemorial had been reproduced in conventional sculpture and painting, designs of "coiling dragons, cloud-phoenixes, kylin lions, Mandarin peacocks, sacred storks, the fungus of longevity, the lion in its lair, the son-producing lily, the hundred flowers, wild geese in the clouds, large crested waves, the band of eight immortals, dragons pursuing pearls, lions playing with embroidered balls, water weeds and sporting fish."

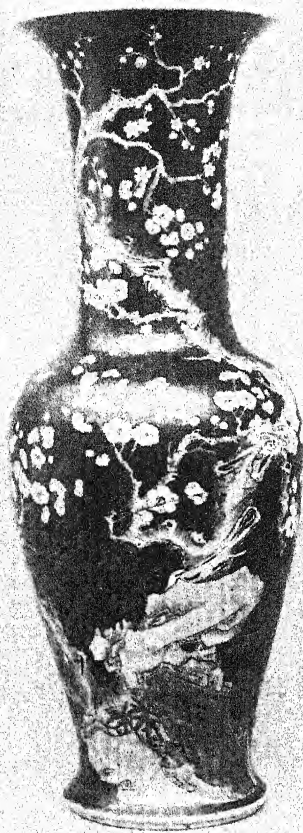
Many figures of Kuanyins, Lohans, and legendary and historic heroes and heroines were also made in porcelain. Some of the loveliest ware from the Ming period is a white Fukien ware, sometimes called *Blanc de Chine*, in which many Buddhist figures were made. It is characteristic of the time that from then on many types of Chinese porcelains were known under French names.

After the advent of the first Chinese porcelains in Europe extensive experimentation began in Italy, Holland, and Germany to discover the secret of the Chinese paste and glazes. Under the ardent patronage of Augustus the Strong, Saxony became the great center for porcelain manufacture in Europe. Meissen and Dresden still continue these early traditions. It was finally here, in 1707, that Böttger produced a hard paste that resembled the Chinese ware; but in the art of glazing, coloring and designing, it is safe to say that European craftsmen never succeeded in producing anything that could even compare with the best ceramic art of the Chinese, which continued to remain the ideal for European porcelain manufacturers.

The developments in porcelain manufacture during the Ming period had the spirit of a renaissance movement without the actual restoration of ancient forms which one associates with that term. While some of

THE EUROPEAN EXPANSION AND CHINA

the old types were continued there is obvious in the development of porcelain manufacture during the Ming and also during the following Ch'ing period a new creative element. A real renaissance in Chinese ceramics is still awaiting its master.



BLACK HAWTHORNE VASE. K'ang Hsi Period
(17th-18th centuries A.D.)
Metropolitan Museum, New York



FAMILLE JAUNE VASE
Enamel Decoration on Yellow Ground
K'ang Hsi Period (17th-18th centuries A.D.)
Metropolitan Museum, New York

XVI

THE MANCHUS

THE emphasis on the decorative art of everyday life, much of it artisans' work, that began during the Ming Dynasty, became a dominant feature during the Manchu régime.

The original home of the Manchu tribe had been on the Liaotung peninsula, but under an able leader they conquered the neighboring tribes and finally grew powerful enough to found a new empire with Mukden as capital, taking the name of Ch'ing. When the Ming Dynasty, due to the decadence of the imperial house, came to an end and the last emperor killed himself, the Manchus marched southward and placed a Manchu prince on the vacant throne in Peking.

Within sixteen years all of China was under Manchu rule. That they succeeded so quickly was largely due to the political dissatisfaction among the people that caused the downfall of the House of Ming. When the dynasty degenerated and when calamities at such times fell upon the land, the emperor was made responsible for the wrath of Heaven. Foreign invasions in the light of this belief became a Heaven-sent scourge. The invaders in their turn retained their power only as long as the prosperity and success of their government proved that they still had Heaven's favor. This belief, firmly entrenched in the consciousness of the Chinese people, explains a great deal in Chinese history inexplicable to the Western mind.

The early success of the Manchus was partly due to this national discontent. But an even greater factor was the brilliant and able personalities of the second emperor, K'ang Hsi, and his grandson, Ch'ien Lung, who between them ruled China for one hundred and twenty years. During their time China was an exceedingly well-governed land with a rapidly increasing population. K'ang Hsi, who came to the throne

THE MANCHUS

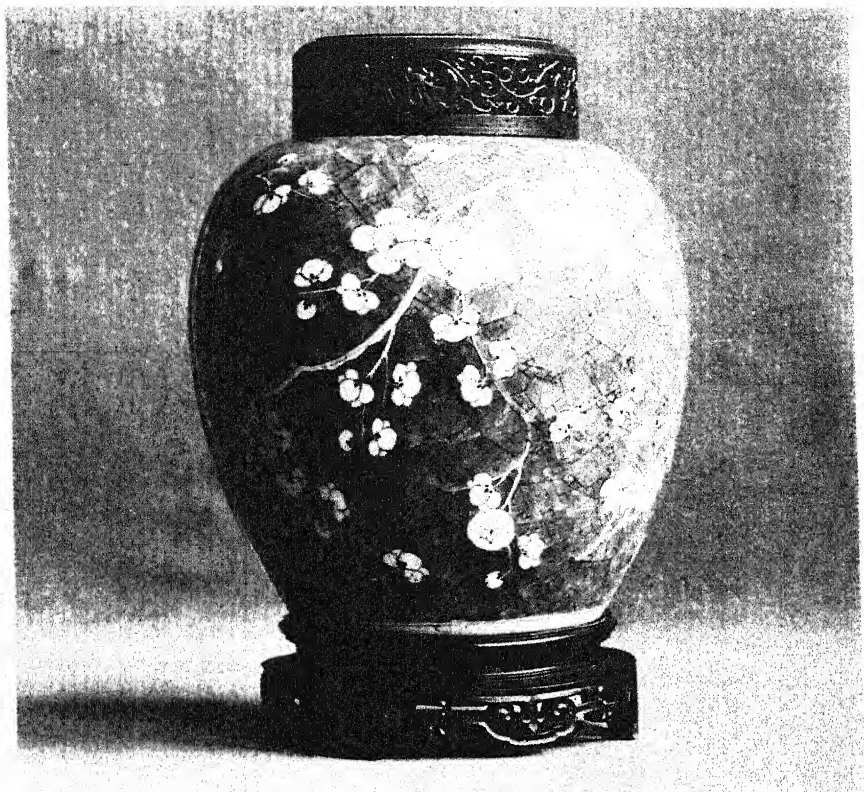
when he was eight years old, showed early great powers of leadership both as a general and administrator, and he, as well as his grandson Ch'ien Lung, remained during their long reigns devoted patrons of literature and art.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the European demand for Chinese porcelains brought about extraordinary developments in this art. Reichwein in his charming book, *China and Europe*, says: "Porcelain which lends itself to light and delicate gradations of color, became the typical material of Rococo art. In this subtlety of feeling lies the secret of the affinity in style of Rococo and Chinese culture. Sublimated in the delicate tints of fragile porcelain, in the vaporous hues of shimmering Chinese silks there revealed itself to the minds of that gracious eighteenth century in Europe a vision of happy living."

K'ang Hsi and Ch'ien Lung both took an intelligent and wholehearted interest in the development of this branch of Chinese art. K'ang Hsi made an early move to transfer some of the Ching Tê factories to Peking, but for some reason or other the attempt died at birth and Ching Tê, stronger than ever, remained for centuries the metropolis of porcelain manufacture.

When Tsang Yuan-hsuan, Secretary of the Imperial Board of Works in 1683, was put in charge of the imperial kilns, a period of unprecedented development was inaugurated. Chinese books which tell about this unusual man say that when he was at work "God laid a finger to the drawing and at the same time prevented the porcelain in the kilns from mishaps." He was an artist himself but must also have been a man of exceptional humane and administrative gifts. It is generally believed that the great success of his administration was partly due to the improvements which he made in the living and working conditions of the workmen, who were given more freedom and comfort, and who consequently gave better workmanship and showed an increased artistic initiative.

The bulk of K'ang Hsi and Ch'ien Lung porcelains are decorated with painted or enamelled designs, although some of the earlier monochromes were reproduced. A great deal of white ware was made for mourning,



BLUE AND WHITE JAR. *Ch'ien Lung* Period (1736-1799 A.D.)
Metropolitan Museum, New York



PORCELAIN CUPS. *Yung Cheng* Period (18th century A.D.)
Metropolitan Museum, New York

THE MANCHUS

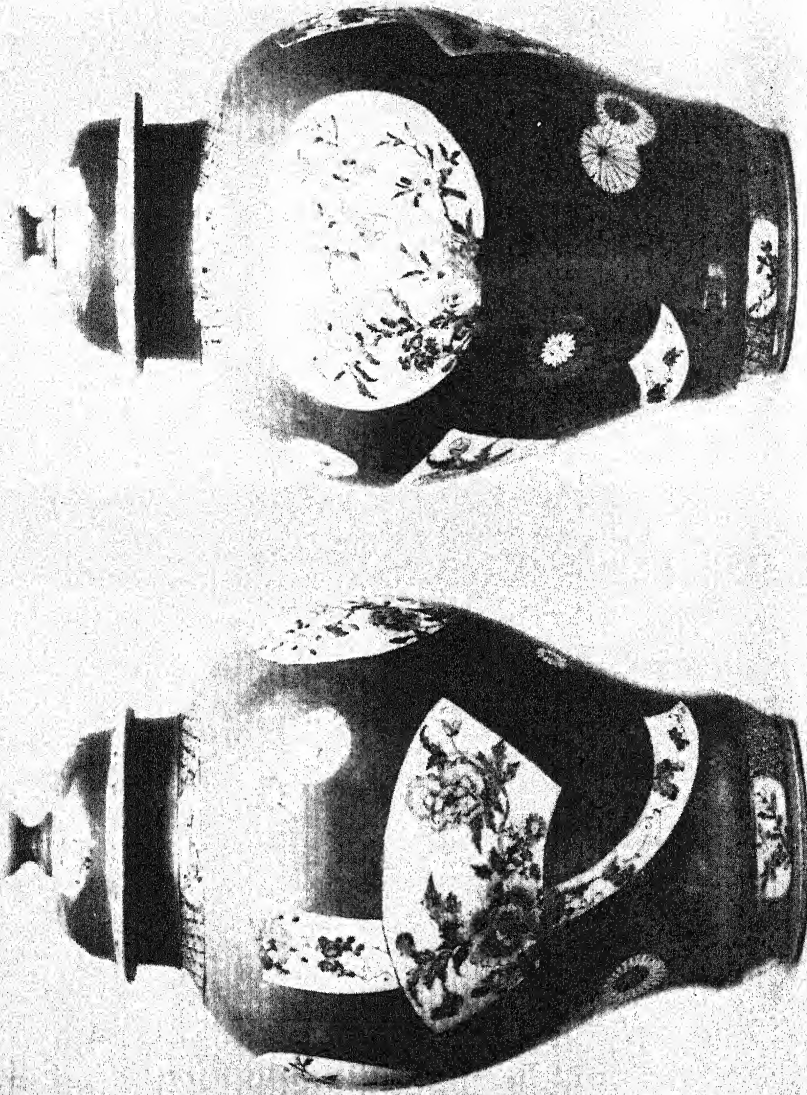
and Celadons continued to be made. But the glaze of these later pieces is like shining satin compared to the soft velvety touch of the Sung potteries which remained unsurpassed.

This, however, was not only a period of reproductions; new types of great beauty were also created. Most famous of these is the red *sang-de-bœuf*, sometimes called oxblood, a material infrequently used in its manufacture. It is a luminous, ruby-like red with a mottled effect sometimes showing through the glaze. The red of the *sang-de-bœuf* was usually obtained from copper, and so was the exquisite rare peach-bloom which, in the best pieces, was made over a Celadon foundation. The Ch'ing Dynasty monochromes come in many colors. There is a cheerful apple-green with a heavy crackle drawn in and a powder-blue decorated with white medallions. Some of these new creations are best known under their European names—such as the delicate *clair de lune*, an evanescent pale blue, which usually comes in small artistic pieces.

Images of Kuanyins, Lohans and Buddhist divinities, formerly made in bronze, stone and marble, were now made in porcelain. These images often show beautiful workmanship and sometimes an individual idea is expressed; but the bulk of this type, and there is a great deal of it, adheres to standardized models and becomes monotonous and uninteresting in its unending repetition of the same motives.

A great deal of Ch'ing porcelain comes in blue and white. This type seems to have made a special appeal to the mariners from the West. The fresh, clean-looking blue and white so-called ginger jars—their decoration nearly always a prunous white plum blossom on a crackled, intensely blue ground which means to the Chinese the end of winter, the coming of spring and the new year of feasting and joy—can be found all over the world, even in New England skippers' homes where they seem to have been made to harmonize with the rag carpets and muslin curtains.

The elegant vivid black and green Hawthorne vases and the whole resplendent *famille verte*, *famille rose*, *famille noire*, and *famille jaune*, with their stylish French names, fitted equally well into Europe's drawing rooms during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These tall



FAMILLE ROSE DECORATION ON COLORED ENAMEL. Ch'ien Lung Period (18th century A.D.)
Metropolitan Museum, New York

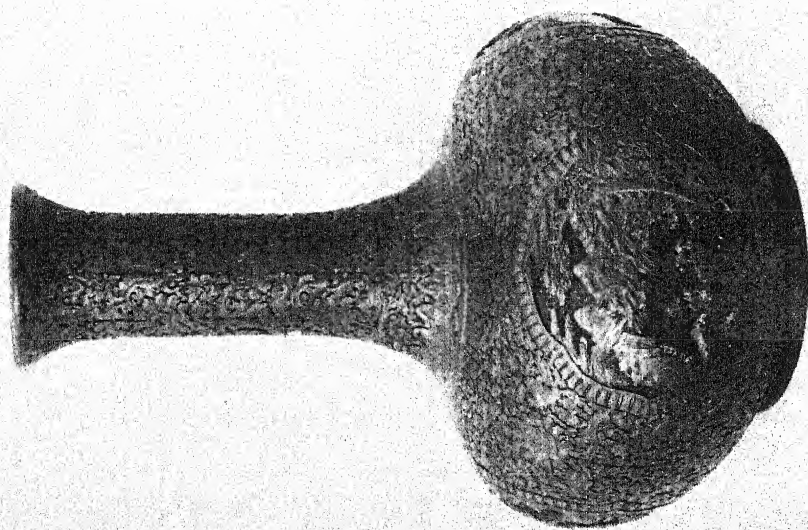
THE MANCHUS

slender vases, sometimes rounded, sometimes with square sides and in many other shapes besides, show in their designs a brilliant array of the flowers of the garden and field in all the colors of the rainbow, with scenes from history and everyday life sometimes depicted.

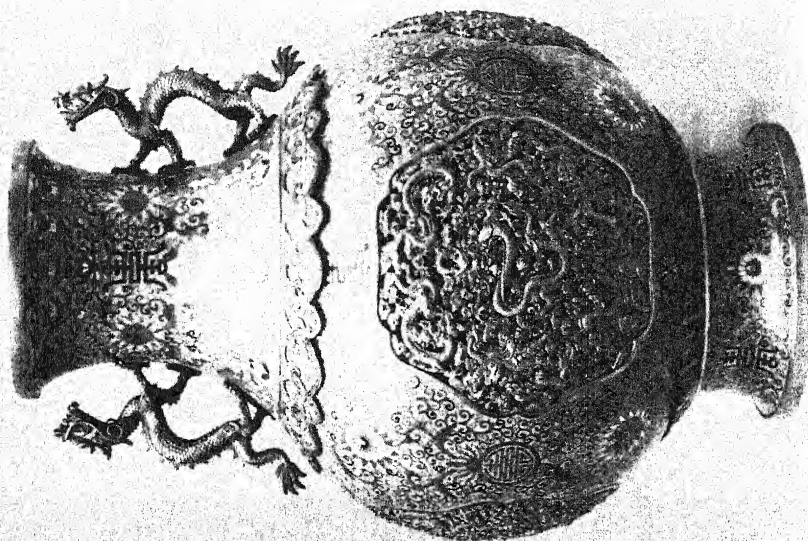
Connoisseurs of Ch'ing porcelains make a distinction between the earlier K'ang Hsi and the later Yung Ch'eng and Ch'ien Lung ware. The bright greens of the earlier period became subdued during the later reigns. The polychrome *famille rose* takes the place of the brilliant *famille verte*. Ch'ing porcelain can easily be studied, as this branch of Chinese art has been more fully covered in books and collections than any other. These later porcelains drew the attention of the West long before any other forms of Chinese art were known. Until the last few decades the West was unaware that this artisans' art was but the brilliant autumn coloring of an art that had existed for thousands of years.

In the decorative art of this period, lacquer became a much used material. The lac tree was cultivated in China even before the Christian era. Colonel Kozloff in excavating Chinese tombs in Mongolia found a well-preserved, exquisitely made and decorated lacquer bowl from before the Christian era. Tables and other objects made of lacquer have also been excavated from Chinese tombs from about the same time, and several lacquer paintings have been found in Korean tombs from a few centuries later and utensils were made of lacquer for the imperial household during the Sung Dynasty, gold and silver lacquer with a plain undecorated surface. During the Mongol régime elaborately carved pieces came into vogue, and pieces inlaid with mother-of-pearl. A great deal of lacquer from the Ming Dynasty has been preserved and shows, as a rule, finer workmanship than later objects. The designs from this period are usually painted in traditional motifs, willowy ladies, pompous officials and romantic garden scenes.

During the last troublesome years of the Ming Dynasty lacquer manufacture seems to have come almost to an end, but it was vigorously restored during the K'ang Hsi reign. From this period has come quantities of lacquer cabinets, chairs, tables, and screens, as well as many smaller pieces. The prevalent use of gold and inlaid effects of mother-



CARVED CINNABAR LACQUER VASE. *Ch'ing Dynasty*
Metropolitan Museum, New York



CLOISONNÉ ENAMEL VASE ON COPPER. *Ch'ien Lung Period*
(18th century A.D.)
Metropolitan Museum, New York

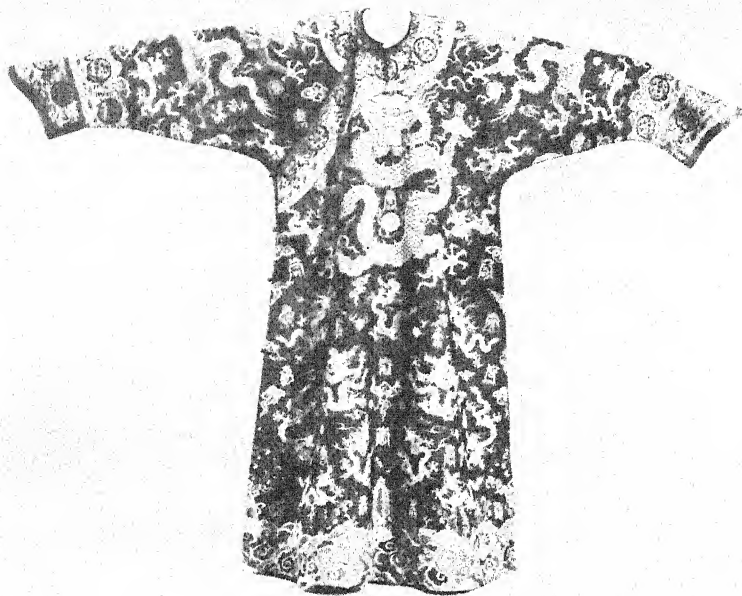
THE MANCHUS

of-pearl and other materials makes the objects of this later period over-elaborate and heavy.

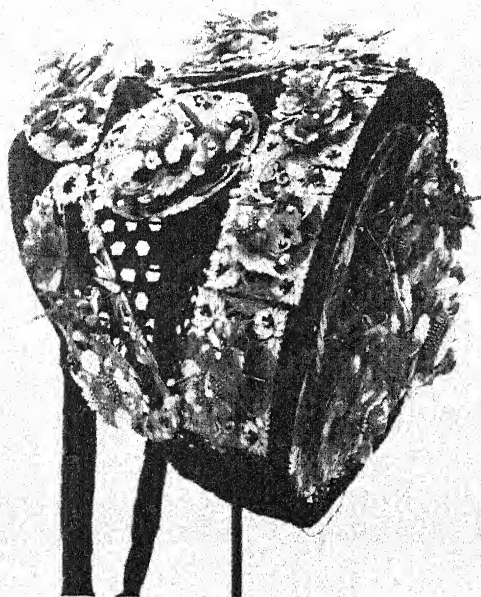
The sculpture of the Manchu period expressed itself also largely in ornamental pieces. Some work was done in wood and stone, but more often in semi-precious stone. Jade and near jade stones were used a great deal. Much of it shows an excellent technique, but one usually looks in vain for individual creative expression. The best carving was done in ivory. The ivory carver of the Ch'ing period had an inexhaustible supply of patience. His skill and technique were superb and the creations of his hand beautiful, but here again one is left unmoved by the inanimate perfection of the work. It was largely a commercial art which catered to the public demand.

The same can be said to an even greater degree about the personal adornments from this period. The Northern invaders had always shown a great love for highly colored and ornamental effects. Although the Manchus adopted Chinese ways to a greater extent than any previous invaders had done, this tendency did not deny itself. Gold and silver ornaments in exquisite designs made by the Chinese from very early times came into vogue for the elaborate headdress of the Manchu women. Garments extravagantly woven and embroidered in gold, silver and silk became the court fashion. The curio shops in Peking and elsewhere are filled with these, sometimes beautiful, but more often gaudy objects, so foreign to the natural refinement and reserve of the Chinese who, even to this day, consider bright contrasting colors in wearing apparel a sign of ill-breeding and poor taste.

In decorative effect the art of the Manchu period stands unsurpassed. Its craftsmanship was comparable and sometimes even superior to earlier periods. The whole gorgeous display of the commercialized decorative art of the Ch'ing period, the beautiful porcelains, rich textiles, cloisonné and lacquer ware and the exquisite carvings in wood, ivory and semi-precious stone could all so easily have been adapted to an industrial age which, in its larger usefulness, to a degree would have compensated for the lack of spiritual content. But the industrial revolution which in the West has slowly related beauty and art to the life of the masses has



IMPERIAL COURT ROBE. *Ch'ing Dynasty (1662-1795 A.D.)*
Metropolitan Museum, New York



MANCHU COURT HEADDRESS (18th-19th century A.D.)
Metropolitan Museum, New York

THE MANCHUS

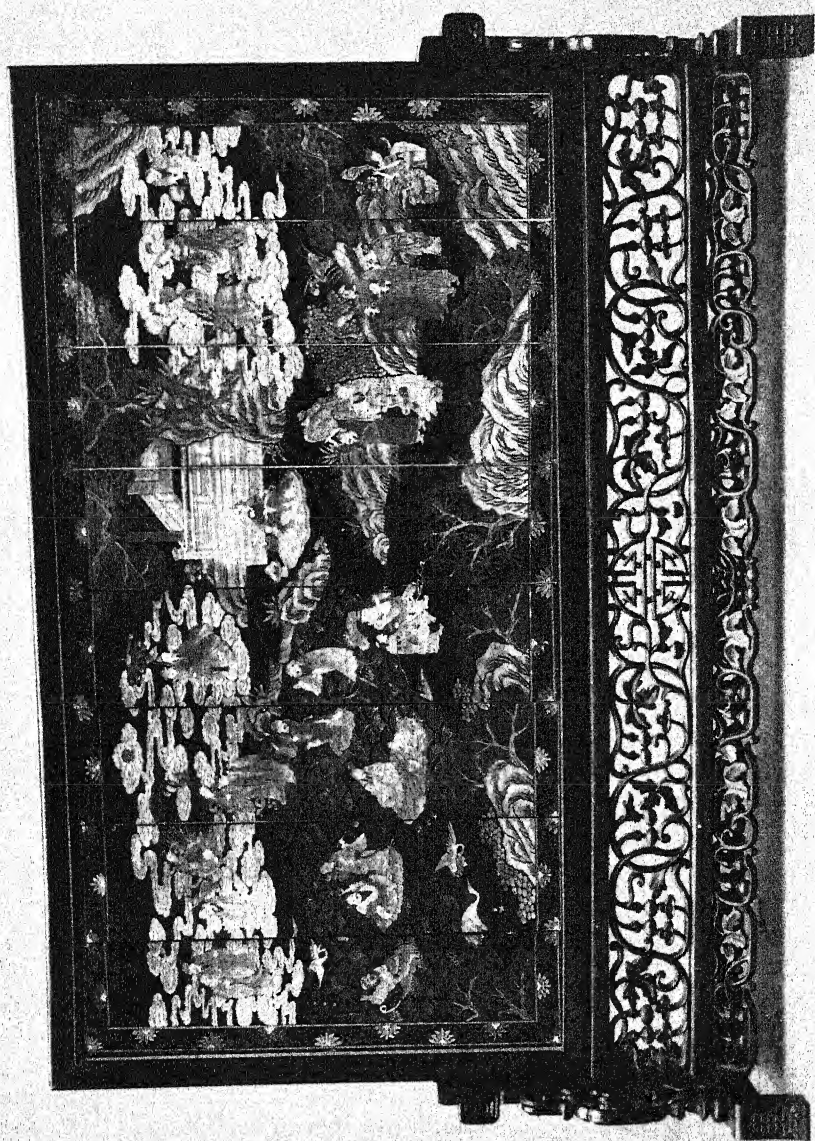
hardly reached China yet. The population increased under the Manchus at an alarming rate. Without any new facilities for an increased earning power, poverty and want grew with it. For the last hundred years and more, life to the average Chinese has been a struggle for existence in which art and beauty have led poverty-stricken lives.

Without an exception, the history of each Chinese dynasty has repeated itself. Invariably they began under the effective rule of one or more able leaders who ushered in a period of external expansion and internal reorganization which resulted in peace and prosperity. And almost as invariably these able monarchs were followed after two or more generations by weak descendants who were dominated and ruined morally and physically by the eunuchs and the ambitious women of the court who often meddled in politics.

After sixty years of prosperous, able administration, Ch'ien Lung abdicated in 1796 and was succeeded by his son Chia Ch'ing. With the death three years later of Ch'ien Lung the decline of the Manchu Dynasty began. The emperors who followed were ineffective if not degenerate and were unable to meet and solve the many problems without and within the empire. During the nineteenth century the persistent unwillingness of the European powers to recognize and tolerate the Chinese desire for insularity created one problem after another which several times led to armed intervention, always ending in the loss of Chinese prestige.

At the death of the weak and dissolute emperor, Hsien Feng, while in exile at Jehol in 1860, T'ung Chih, a child of four, was put on the throne. From that time until 1908 China was virtually ruled by the Empress Tz'u Hsi, T'ung Chih's mother, although his royal parentage has been called into question. Belonging to a powerful Manchu family, she began her career as a secondary wife, but by exceptional ability and unscrupulous methods succeeded in keeping China's destiny for fifty years in her delicate hands. But for this brilliant woman the Manchu Dynasty would no doubt have come to an end long before it did.

Tz'u Hsi's son died while still a young man, a moral and physical wreck, and Kuang Hsü, a nephew from the Empress Dowager's own



LACQUER SCREEN (19th century A.D.)
Metropolitan Museum, New York

THE MANCHUS

clan, was put on the throne while still a child. Kuang Hsü, who under more favorable conditions might have proved a good ruler, had no chance, pitted against his ambitious and capable aunt. After an abortive attempt to introduce reforms and Western methods of government he was made a prisoner in 1898 and remained a mere figurehead until his death in 1908, only a few hours before the death of the Empress Dowager.

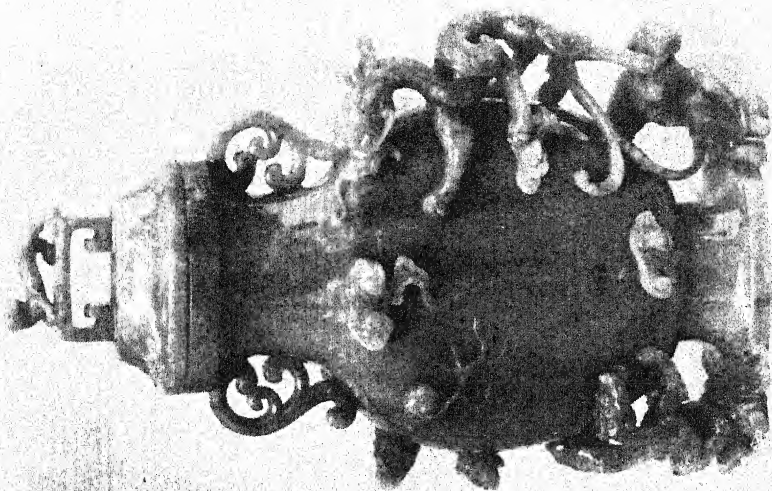
Tz'u Hsi, or Old Buddha as she was called by her subjects, will go down in the annals of Chinese history as one of its most remarkable women. In her character she combined strange contradictions. Full of changing moods, feminine charms and childish playfulness, she could, when occasion demanded, exhibit a most brilliant, lucid mind, great courage, power of decision, and a ruthless will-power which did not hesitate to employ cruel and unscrupulous means. After the destruction of the old Summer Palace by the Allies in 1860, she peremptorily seized, some years later, a large navy appropriation and built herself a new one. This place, a few miles from Peking, with its artificially made lake and hills, picturesque towers and beautiful buildings, was Tz'u Hsi's favorite home. In this lovely spot the more esthetic and gentle sides of her nature, her love for theatricals, painting, and everything beautiful played a major part in her life. The Summer Palace and Peking itself, the world's most colorful city, as it is today, remain the greatest artistic monument of the Manchus, who effectively continued where the Mings left off.

Peking as it was planned by Yung Lo, the early Ming emperor, was never materially changed by the Manchus. As the palace buildings deteriorated they were either restored or rebuilt closely following the earlier style. It is sometimes difficult in the earlier buildings to know where the Mings left off and the Manchus began. The buildings by the Ming Tombs near Peking and a few authentic Ming survivals contrasted with later additions indicate a nobler simplicity in Ming architecture and a tendency to over-elaboration in the later.

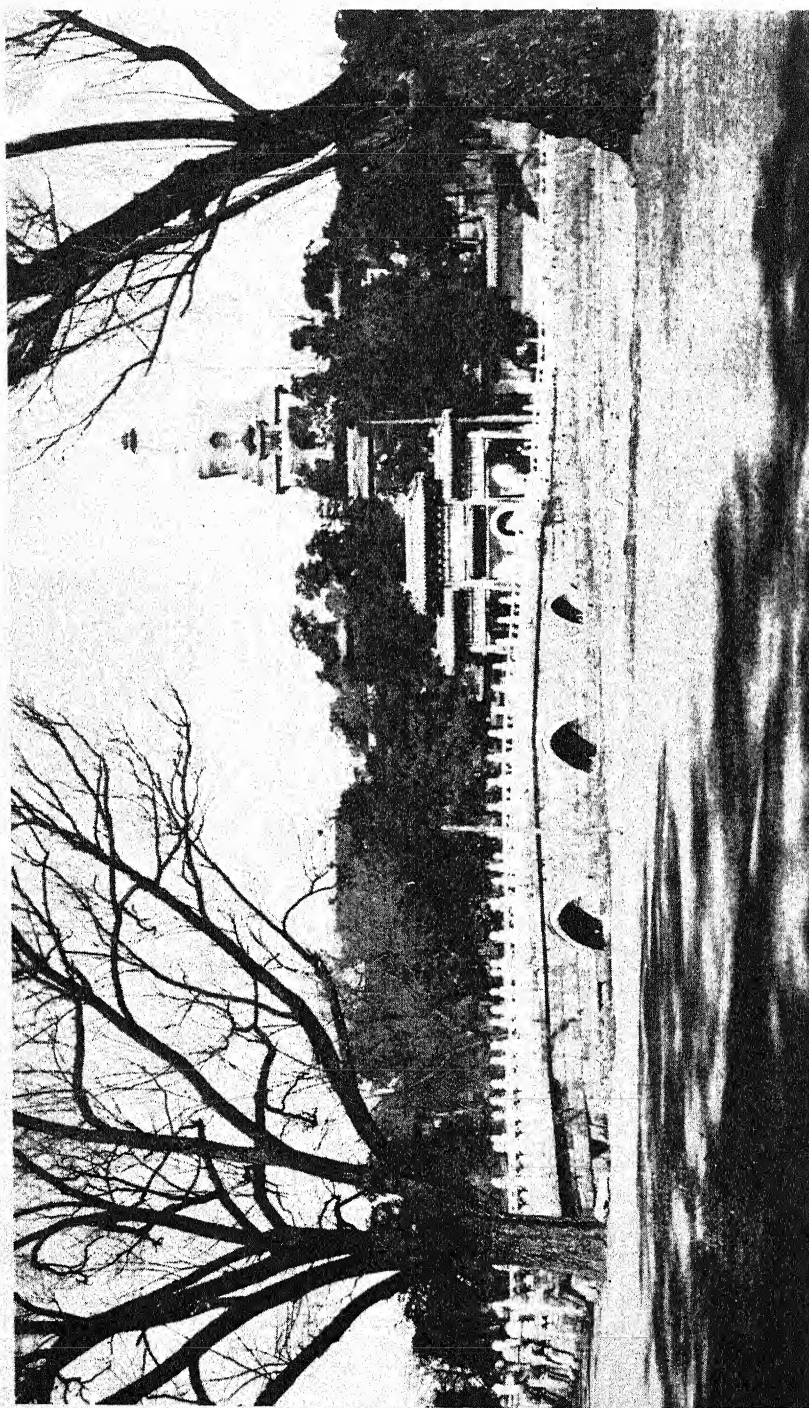
In the painted decoration of the buildings the same tendency is believed to have been typical of the two periods. The Ming emperors prob-



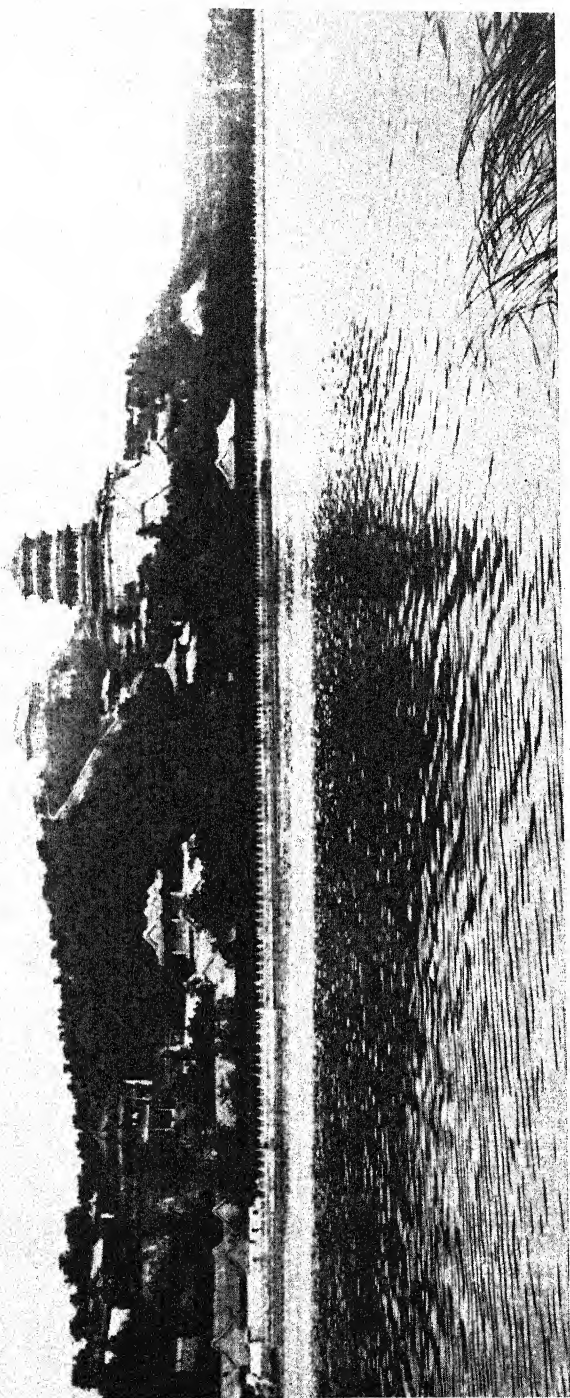
JADE SACRIFICIAL TRIPOD. Ch'ien Lung Period (18th century A.D.)
Metropolitan Museum, New York



JADE VASE NEPHRITE. K'ang Hsi Period
(17th-18th century A.D.)
Metropolitan Museum, New York



DAGOBA AND IMPERIAL BRIDGE, PEKING



THE SUMMER PALACE

Built by the Empress Dowager Tz'u Hsi (1860-1908 A.D.)

THE MANCHUS

ably brought with them the restraint in color that has ever been characteristic of the South, while the Manchus, in every respect, seem to have inherited, in an unstinted measure, the love for a gaudy colorful display of the Northern barbarians.

The architectural additions of the Manchus did not, however, in any way mar the beauty of Peking, but rather added to its picturesque appeal. Even the towering ugliness of the Dagoba, built by Ch'ien Lung to please a homesick Tartar concubine, by sheer contrast adds to the glorious skyline of the golden-tiled roofs of the palaces of the Forbidden City, which today has been made into a museum for the precious art treasures of the past.

The old magic beliefs, funeral rites and religious ideas, which for five thousand years had played a dominant rôle in the development of Chinese art, had their last magnificent display at the funeral of the Empress Tz'u Hsi and her unhappy nephew. Bland and Backhouse, in their masterly biography of the Old Buddha, give a vivid description of the closing rites of the last Manchu ruler.

"A magnificent barge, made of paper over a hundred and fifty feet long, was set up outside the Forbidden City on a large empty space adjoining the Coal Hill. It was crowded with figures of attendant eunuchs and handmaidens and contained furniture and viands for the use of the illustrious dead in the lower regions. A throne was placed in the bow and around it were kneeling effigies of attendant officials all wearing their robes of state as if the shades of Tz'u Hsi were holding an audience.

"On the morning of the Buddhist All Souls Festival, the Regent in the name of the Baby Emperor performed sacrifices before the barge, which was then set alight and burnt, in order that 'Old Buddha' might enjoy the use of it at the 'Yellow Springs.' A day or two before her funeral, hundreds of paper effigies of attendants, cavalry, camels and other pack animals, were similarly burnt so that her spirit might enjoy all the pomp to which she had been accustomed."

In this holocaust came to an end the third epoch in Chinese art. Never again would the burial of a Chinese sovereign be attended by the colorful display of these ancient rites which down through the centuries had

THE MANCHUS

proved a never failing source of inspiration to Chinese artists. New China, Young China, was standing at the door waiting to come in, and in the hands of these eager youths is left the continuation of the world's longest uninterrupted artistic development.

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INDEX

Adornments, personal, 198
 Afghanistan, 80
 Alexander the Great, 75
 Alfalfa, 50
 Altai Mountains, 32
 Altar, 172
 Altar of Agriculture, 172, 174
 Altar of Heaven, 172, 174
 America, 184
 discovery of, 181, 186
 Amo-li-kia (America), 184
 Amulets, 20, 96
 Anau, 8
 Ancestor worship, 16
 Ancestral cult, 25
 Ancestral spirit, 20
 Ancient ceremonies, 172
 Andersson, J. G., 3, 4, 5
 Animal sculpture, 8
 Animal Style art, 24, 34, 36, 52, 78, 100
 Eurasian, 25, 32, 39, 54
 Animals, stone, 174
 Animistic beliefs, 98
 An Si-Kao, 84
 Anyang, 8, 24, 52
 Anyang bronzes, 54
 Anyang sculpture, 10
 Apollo Belvedere, 78
 Archæology, 60
 Architecture, Chinese, 56, 66, 118, 166,
 168, 170, 202
 drawings, 122
 Art, Buddhist, 76
 decorative, 196, 198
 early, 57
 early Christian, 120, 122
 Hellenistic, 75
 Indian Buddhist, 100
 inlaid, 54

Asia, Central, 27, 81, 166
 Asoka, 75
 Astronomy, 66
 Attila, 49
 Augustus the Strong, 188

 Babylon, 28
 Babylonia, 75
 Bactria, 75
 Bamboo, 163
Bamboo Books, 28, 66
Bamboo in Monochrome, 163
 Barbarians, 28, 42, 49, 60, 68, 76, 86, 102,
 109, 184
 Baroque, 186
 Belt-hooks, 54
 Berlin Ethnographical Museum, 81
 Binyon, Lawrence, 90
Blanc de Chine, 188
 Block printing, European, 122
 Bodhisattvas, 70, 75, 102, 113, 161
 Bone ornaments, 54
Book of Rites, 62
 Boston Museum, 138
 Böttger, 188
 Bronze making, 8, 28
 Bronze mirrors, 47, 117
 Bronzes, 16, 44, 46, 47, 48, 54, 59, 62, 117
 ceremonial, 54
 designs on, 88
 early, 8, 24
 ritual, 22
 Brush stroke, 88
 Buckles, Chinese, 54
 Buddha, 11
 Buddha relics, 113
 Buddhas, 161
 Buddhism, 16, 62, 70, 75, 83, 86, 95, 96,
 113, 122, 138, 155

INDEX

- Buddhist All Souls Festival, 206
 Buddhist art, 76
 Buddhist bronze making, 104
 Buddhist divinities, 194
 Buddhist iconography, 122
 Buddhist monasteries, 120, 161
 Buddhist paintings, 81
 earliest, 92
 Buddhist pictures, 122
 printed, 120
 Buddhist religion, 76
 Buddhist scriptures, 82
 Buddhist sculpture, 80, 100, 102, 106, 120
 Buddhist temples, 102
 Builders, Chinese, 118
 Buildings, 54, 56
 Burial chamber, 32
 Burton, W., 146
 Bushell, S. W., 14, 62

 Cæsar, Augustus, 78
 Calligraphy, 90, 162
 Cambuluc, city of, 160
 Camels, 118
 Canton, 182
 Caravan routes, 51, 80, 117
 Cards, playing, 122
 Carved bone, 8
 Cathay, 184
 Caucasus, 38
 Caves, 95, 104
 "Caves of the Thousand Buddhas," 81
 Celadon, 150, 194
 Central Asia, 27
 excavations in, 166
 oases in, 81
 Ceramics, 118, 162, 188
 Ceremonial bronzes, 54
 Ceremonies, Ancient, 172
 annual, 172
Ch'a Ching, classic on tea, 118
 Cha Ch'ing, 172
 Ch'an sect, 113
 Chang Ch'ien, 49, 50, 78, 117
 Chang Nan-pên, 124
 Ch'angan, 56, 112, 114
 Ch'ang-O, 64
 Chao Meng-fu, 162
 Charlemagne, 114
 Charms, 96
 Chavannes, Edouard, 62
 Chekiang school, 176
 Ch'en Hung, 124
 Chi Li, 24
 Chia Ch'ing, 200
 Ch'ien Hsüan, 162
 Ch'ien Lung, 191, 200, 206
 porcelains, 192
 Chilu Hsien, 148
 Ch'in, 41, 46
 art, 44
 Ch'in Shih Huang-ti, 41
 China, civilization, 83, 109, 112, 184
 Dark Ages, 83, 110
 folklore, 24, 66
 history of, 51, 110
 literary heritage, 109
 mythology, 24, 66
 Northern invaders, 166
 pictorial art in, 86, 88
 relations with the West, 50
 social system, 109
 stone-age, 3
China and Europe, 192
 Chinese designs, 52
 Chinese embroidery, 52
 Chinese life-conception, 95
 Chinese lunar year, 172
 Chinese New Year, 172
 Ch'ing Dynasty, 191
 monochromes, 194
 porcelain, 194
 Ching Tê, 161, 192
 Ching Tê Chen, 187
Chinoiserie, 186, 187
 Chins, 166
 Chou Dynasty, 10, 12, 16, 41, 46, 56
 bronzes, 44, 47
 potteries, 59
 Christian missionaries, early, 114
 Christianity, 75, 76
 Ch'u, 41, 46
 Chu Chi-chi'en, 56
 Chu Hsi, 155, 156
 Chu Yuan-chang, 165
 Chün kilns, 150

INDEX

Chün ware, 150
 Cicada, 20
 City planning, 56
 Civilization, Chinese, 83, 109, 112, 184
 Classics, 155
 Clay buildings, 54
 Cloud phoenixes, 188
 Coiling dragons, 188
 Coloring, 188
 Columbus, 184
 Confucian classics, 104, 120
 Confucian renaissance, 144
 Confucian ritual, 59
 Confucian tradition, 113
 Confucianism, 68, 83, 95, 104, 113, 155
 Confucius, 11, 12, 22, 62, 88, 152, 155
 Court fashion, 198
 Cowries, 18
 Culture, Chinese, 110, 192

 Dagoba, 206
 Dances, ceremonial, 172
 Dead, cult of, 59
 DeMorgan, 27
 Desert oasis, 51
 Designing, 188
Diamond Sutra, 120
 Divination, 8
 Dragon, 25, 46, 66, 88, 104, 150, 168, 188

 Earth and water spirits, 96
 Eclecticism, 104
 Embroidery, Chinese, 52
 Emperor Justinian, 51
 Emperor Shun, 24, 166
 Emperor Wu, 49
 Empress Dowager Tz'u Hsi, 115, 200, 202
 Empress Dowager Wang, 84
 Empress Shotoku, 120
 Empress Wu Hou, 115
 English, 182
 Eros, 80
 Eurasia, 4
 Eurasian Animal Style Art, 25, 32, 39, 54
 Europe, 184
 commercial expansion, 181

Europe (Cont.)
 expansion, 49, 156, 181, 186
 industrial art, 186
 Renaissance in, 122
 Rococo period, 187
Europe and China, 27, 51
 Europeans, 158

Famille jaune, 194
Famille noire, 194
Famille rose, 194
Famille verte, 194
 Fan K'uan, 138
 Fecundity cult, 24, 25
 Feicheng, 64
Feng-shui, 96
 Ferghana, 50, 75, 78
 Fertility cult, 25
 Feudal system, 44
 Figures, ornamental, 118
 Filigree work, 117
 Fish, 22
 Fisher, Otto, 68
 Folklore, Chinese, 24, 66
 Forbidden City, 168, 206
 Foreign invasions, 109, 191
 Freer Gallery, Washington, 176
 Frescoes, 81, 122
 Fu Hsi, 25, 64
 Fukien ware, 188
 Funeral customs, 174
 Funeral rites, 206
 Funerary stones, 54, 62, 66, 96
 Funerary urns, 68
 Fungus of longevity, 188

 Gandhi, 12
 Gardner Museum, 62
 Garments, 198
 Ghandara, 76
 Giles, 93, 122, 126, 128, 136, 162
 Glass, colored, ornaments of, 52
 manufacture, 52
 Roman, 52
 Glazing, 60, 188, 189
 God of the soil, 174
 Goths, 54
 Gottland, 48

INDEX

- Grand Khan, 168
- Grape, 117
- Grape vine, 50
- Grave chambers, 22
- Grave figures, 118, 174
- Grave urns, 4
 - terracotta, 68
- Graves, Han Dynasty, 59, 62, 118
 - Mongolian, 68
 - stone-age, 3, 22
- Great Wall, 56, 80
- Greece, 11
- Greek, 78, 80
- Greek sphere, 75
- Griaznow, M. P., 32
- Grünwedel, 81
- Gutenberg, 82, 122

- Han Dynasty, 22, 44, 49, 50, 52, 54, 56, 81, 83, 109, 152
 - graves, 59, 62, 118
 - paintings, 68
 - sculpture, 62
 - tiles, paintings on, 90
- Han Kan, 124
- Hangchow, 136, 160, 161
- Hare, 66
- Hebrew poetry, 11
- Hedin, Sven, 81
- Hellenistic art, 75, 95
- Hellenistic-Buddhist influences, 117
- Hellström, 62
- Herodotus, 22, 27
- Hill jars, 62
- History, Chinese, 110, 152
- Hittite, 32
- Hobson, 118, 150, 187
- Honan, 3
- Honan mirrors, 47
- Honan vessels, 4
- Hordes, 38, 41, 78
- Houses, 54
- Hsia Dynasty, 28
- Hsia kingdom, 135
- Hsia Kuei, 142
- Hsiao Wei, 102
- Hsieh Chi, 124
- Hsieh Ho, 92

- Hsien Feng, 200
- Hsiung-nus, 38, 49, 76, 78, 98
- Hsu Hsing, 12
- Hsuan Ts'ang, 113
- Hsuing Chou, 118
- Hu Shih, 49
- Huai bronzes, 46, 48
- Huai designs, 48
- Huai mirrors, 47
- Huai River Valley, 46
- Huang Kung-wang, 162
- Huang Ti, 25, 46, 51
- Hudson, G. F., 27, 51, 52
- Hui Tsung, 135, 136
- Hundred flowers, 188
- Hung Wu, 165
- Hunting scenes, 68

- Iliad*, 11
- Immortality drugs, 66
- Imperial expansion, 49, 114
- Imperial kilns, 192
- Imperial mounts, 118
- Imperial Palace Museum, Peking, 176
- Imperial Palaces, 172
- India, 11
- Indian Buddhist art, 100
- Indian emblems, 80
- Inertia, artistic, 155
- Inlaid art, 54
- Indo-European, 78
- Indo-Scythian Empire, 76, 83
- Ink rubbings, 120
- Introduction to the History of Chinese Pictorial Art*, 93
- Iron, 62
- Israel, 11
- Ivory, 198
 - carving in, 198

- Jade, 16, 20, 150, 198
 - charms, 20
 - symbols, 18, 20, 22
- Japan, 184
- Jars, hill, 62
 - stone-age, 88
- Jehol, 200
- Jewelry, imitation, 52

INDEX

- Ju kiln, 152
- Justinian, Emperor, 51
- Kaifeng, 135
- K'ang Hsi, 191
 - porcelains, 192
- Kanishka, 78
- Kansu, 3, 4, 76
- Karlbeck, 46
- Karlgren, 8, 25, 84, 109, 115
- Kassite, 28
- Khotan, 122
- Kiangnan, 138
- Kiangsi, 148
- Kiangsu, 187
- Kinsai, 160
- Kitan Tartars, 166
- Kitan tribe, 135
- Ko kiln, 152
- Ko Yao, 152
- Korea, tombs in, 196
- Kozloff, Colonel, 52, 68, 196
- Ku K'ai chih, 90, 110, 124
- Kuan, Lady, 163
- Kuan kiln, 152
- Kuan Wu-Ti, 84
- Kuan Yao, 152
- Kuan Yü, 86
- Kuang Hsü, 200
- Kuanyins, 104, 188, 194
- Kublai Khan, 158
- Kucha, 78
- Kuling Mountain, 142
- Kuo Hsi, 142
- Kylin lions, 188
- Lacquer, 196
- Lacquer bowls, 59
- Landscapes, Sung Dynasty, 132, 140
- Lao Tzu, 11, 12
- Laufer, 118, 184
- Leading kilns, 146
- Le Coq, Albert van, 81
- Legendary material, 64
- Leningrad Museum, 30
- Li Chao-tao, 128
- Li Ch'eng, 136
- Li Ch'ien, 122
- Li Chung-ho, 122
- Li Lung-mien, 142
- Li Matou, 184
- Li Shi-min, 112
- Li Ssü-hsün, 126, 128, 136
- Li T'ai-po, 116
- Li Ti, 142
- Li-wei-ya (Libya), 184
- Liang, 122
 - house of, 110
- Liao Kitans, 166
- Liaotung peninsula, 191
- Lin Liang, 176
- Lion in its lair, 188
- Lions, winged, 110
- Literary heritage, China, 109
- Literary sources, 68
- Loess soil, 59, 170
- Lohans, 161, 188, 194
- Loo, 62
- Lou-lan, 78, 81
- Loyang, 56, 102, 115
- Lu Pan, 88
- Lu Yü, 118
- Lunar Year, Chinese, 172
- Lung Chuan kilns, 150
- Lung Mên Caves, 102
- Luristan, 32
- Ma Lin, 142
- Ma Tuan-lin, 51
- Ma Yüan, 142, 176
- Macao, 182
- Magic, art of, 126
 - beliefs, 68, 88, 206
 - cult of, 120
- Manchuria, 3
- Manchus, 38, 166, 191
 - art of, 198
- Mandarin peacocks, 188
- Manichaeism, 113
- Masefield, John, 158
- Medicine men, Taoist, 66
- Medusa, 80
- Mencius, 22
- Mesopotamia, 8, 28
- Metropolitan Museum, 36
- Mi Fei, 144

INDEX

- Mi Lo-Fu, 161
 Ming Dynasty, 165, 181, 191
 architecture, 202
 art, 174
 emperors, 202
 grave figures, 174
 painters, 176
 paintings, 176
 potters, 188
 régime, 156
 sculpture, 174
 tombs, 174
 Ming Huang, 115, 128
Ming Shi, 184
 Ming T'ang, 56
 Ming Ti, 83
 Minusinsk Museum, 30
 Mirrors, 47, 117
 Missionaries, early, 182
 Mohammedanism, 158, 182
 Mongol capital, 165
 Mongol conquest, 158
 Mongol Dynasty, 28
 Mongolia, 49
 Chinese tombs in, 196
 graves, 68
 Mongols, 36, 38, 156, 161, 181
 Monochromes, 188, 194
 Monuments, architectural, 56
 non-Buddhist sculptural, 110
 Mother-of-pearl, 196
 Mo Ti, 12
 Moule, 114
 Mountain caves, 96
 Movable type, 82
 Mukden, 191
 Music, ceremonial, 172
 Mythology, Chinese, 24, 66

 Nanking, 86, 110, 136, 165, 174, 187
 Neo-Confucianism, 156
 Nestorian Christian missionaries, 113
 Nestorian churches, 114
 "Nestorian Crosses," 120
 Nestorian tablet, 114
 Nestorianism, 120
 Nestorius, 113
 New Year, Chinese, 172

 Ni Tsan, 162
 Nirvana, 113
 Niya, 80
 Nomad tribes, 28, 57, 95, 98, 161
 invasions, 27, 41, 56
 Non-Buddhist sculptural monuments, 110
 Northern invaders, 166, 198
 Northern Sung, 162
 Northern Wei Dynasty, 86, 98, 102

 Oases, in Central Asia, 81
 Odes, Chinese, 11
 early, 56
Odyssey, 11
 Old Buddha, 202
 Oracle bones, 8
 Ordos bronzes, 36, 39
 Ornaments, bone, 53
 Ou-lo-pa (Europe), 184

Pa Kua, 64
 Painted designs, 150
 Painting, perspective, 140
 Occidental and Chinese, 140
 Paintings, Chinese, Academic element in,
 92
 authenticity, 124
 in British Museum, 90
 Buddhist, 92
 early, 68
 Han Dynasty, 68
 tiles, 66
 Ming Dynasty, 176
 Northern School, 126, 128, 136
 Six Dynasties, 92
 Southern School, 128, 162, 163
 Southern Sung Dynasty, 138, 140
 T'ang period, 122
 Palaces, 168
 Paleolithic, 96
 Pan Chao, 83
 Pan Ku, 83
 Paper, invention of, 75, 120, 122
 Paper money, 160
 Parthia, 51
 Patterned silk, 52
 Peach-bloom, 194
 Peiping, *see* Peking

INDEX

- Peking, 56, 174, 191
 - buildings, 168
 - city plan, 168
 - history, 166
- Peking Palace Museum, 148
- Persia, 75
- Persian art, 117
- Pheasant, 25
- Phoenix, 104, 188
- Playing cards, 122
- Pliny, 51
- Plum blossom, 163
- Poetry, Hebrew, 11
 - Tang era, 118
- Polo, Marco, 158, 168, 184
 - travels of, 184
- Pope, 182
- Porcelain manufacture, 155, 187
 - in Europe, 188
- Porcelains, Chinese, 188, 192, 194, 198
- Portuguese, 182
- Post, department of, 160
- Pottery figures, 174
- Pottery making, 59, 140, 146, 150, 161, 188
- Printing, 104, 120
 - invention of, 120
- "Pure Land" sect, 113
- Reichwein, 192
- Religion, Buddhist, 76
 - in China, 16
- Religious ideas, 206
- Religious freedom, 113
- Religious pictures, 122
- Religious sculpture, 161
- Religious toleration, 112
- Renaissance in Europe, 122
- Ricci, Matteo, 182
- Rig-Veda*, 11
- Ritual, 16, 20, 22, 75, 182, 206
 - Confucian, 59
- Ritual bronzes, 22
- Rococo art, 186, 192
- Roman Empire, 49, 50
- Roman glass, 52
- Rome, 51, 182
- Rubbings, 66
- Russia, South, 27
- Rydh, Hannah, 4, 6
- Sacred storks, 188
- Sacred tripods, 66
- Sacrifices, 18, 20, 22, 66, 170, 172
- Samarkand, 84, 115
- Sanctuaries, 96
- Sang-de-bœuf*, 194
- Sanskrit, 78
- Saxony, 188
- Script, ideographic, 109
- Scriptures, Buddhist, 82
- Sculptors, Chinese, 96, 104
- Sculpture, 57, 62, 96
 - animal, 8
 - Buddhist, 80, 100
 - Han Dynasty, 62
 - Manchu period, 198
 - Ming Dynasty, 174
 - religious, 161
- Scythia, 27
- Scythians, 22, 30
- Sea routes, exploration, 82
- Seal, 124
- Secret societies, 165
- Sedan chair, 186
- Seres, 51
- Shang Dynasty, 10, 24
- Shantung funerary stones, 54, 62, 66, 96
- She Chi, 18
- Shekwan, 187
- Shên Nung, 25, 64, 172
- Shih Huang-ti, 83
- Shotoku, Empress, 120
- Shouchou, 46
 - mirrors, 47
- Shun, Emperor, 24, 166
- Siberia, 30
- Silk, 51, 192
 - gauzes, 51
 - patterned, 51, 52
 - trade, 51, 75
- Sirèn, 170
- Six Dynasties, 38, 86, 152
 - painters, 92
- Social system, Chinese, 109
- Socrates, 11

INDEX

- Sogdiana, 84
- Son of Heaven, 18, 20, 172
- Son-producing lily, 188
- South Russia, 27, 30
- Southern Sung Dynasty, 160
- Spaniards, 182
- Spirit Walk*, 174
- Spirits, 96
- Ssü-ma Ch'ien, 83
- Stein, Sir Aurel, 80, 82
- Steles, 104
- Stockholm Museum, 36
- Stone-age, 3
 - graves, 3, 22
 - jars, designs on, 88
- Stone animals, 174
- Stone drums, 12
- Stones, sculptured, 56, 62
- Sui Dynasty, 110, 112
- Suiyuan, 36, 60
- Summer palace, 202
- Sun Wei, 124
- Sun Yat-sen, 165
- Sung Dynasty, 135, 152, 155
 - art, 152
 - artists, 140
 - landscapes, 132, 140
 - monochrome ceramics, 188
 - painters, 140
 - potteries, 140, 146, 150
- Swastika, 120
- Symbols, 22
 - animal, 70
 - heaven and earth, 20
 - jades, 22
- Syria, 75

- Tai Chin, 176
- Tai Sing, 124
- T'ai Tsung, 112, 118, 128
- T'ai Tzu, 135
- Taiku, city of, 170
- Tan Tu, 166
- T'ang Dynasty, 93, 109, 152
 - art, 117, 124
 - artists, 122
 - ceramics from, 118
 - kilns, 118
- T'ang Dynasty (Cont.)
 - paintings, 122
 - poets of, 116
- T'ang Yin, 176
- T'ang Yinching, 150
- Taoism, 59, 68, 113, 155, 156
- Taoist legends, 64
- Taoist medicine men, 66
- Taoist mysticism, 83, 138
- Taoist necromancers, 96
- Tao-t'ieh, 24, 46
- Tarim Basin, 78
- Tatung-fe, 98
- Tea Classic*, 150
- Tea cult, 117
- Temple caves, 95, 102
- Temple of Heaven, 172
- Temples, 172
- Terracotta grave urns, 68
- Textiles, Chinese, 52, 54, 198
 - Turkestan, 68
- Theological disputes, 182
- Three Kingdoms, 86
- Thunder pattern, 25
- Tiles, 66
 - decorated, 59
 - glazed, 118
 - painted, 68, 90
- Ting ceramics, 162
- Ting kilns, 148, 152
- Ting ware, 148
- TLV design, 47
- Toad, three-legged, 66
- Tolstoi, 12
- Tombs, 174
- Topa Tao, 98
- Topa tribe, 86, 98
- Toronto Museum, grave ceramics in, 174
- Tripods, sacred, 66
- Tripolje, 8
- Tsai Yuan-pei, 28
- Tsang Yuan-hsuan, 192
- Ts'ao, 88
- Ts'ao Pa, 124
- Tso-chuan*, 28
- Ts'ui Yung, 118
- Tsung Ping, 92
- Tu Fu, 116

INDEX

- Tung Ch'i-ch'ang, 176
 T'ung Chih, 200
 Tung Yuan, 138
 Tunhuang, 81
 Turfan, 78, 81
 Turfan oasis, 81
 Turkestan, textiles from, 68
 Turks, 49
 T'zu Chou potteries, 150
 Tz'u Hsi, Empress Dowager, 115, 200,
 202
 Urga, 52
 Waley, Arthur, 20, 57
 Wang, Empress Dowager, 84
 Wang Mang, 57, 84
 Wang Wei, 116, 128, 138
 Wang Yen-shou, 57
 Wei-ch'ih I-seng, 122
 Wei Dynasty, 122
 inscriptions, 104
 Wen Ti, 110
 Wen Wang, 12, 14
 Wilhelm, 109
 Witchcraft, animistic, 155
 Wood, carvings in, 198
 Writing, 88
 Wu, Emperor, 49
 Wu Hou, Empress, 115
 Wu Tao-tzù, 116, 124
 Wu Ti, 50
 Wu Wang, 12
 Wusih, 90
 Yang, 18, 60
 Yang Chu, 12
 Yang-Kwei-fei, 116
 Yangshao, 4, 6
 Yellow River, 148
 Yen Hui, 162
 Yen Li-pên, 122
 Yen Li-tê, 122
 Yen kingdom, 166
 Yin Dynasty, 8, 10, 18, 41
 Yin Ch'ing kilns, 148
 ware, 148
 Yuan Chün ware, 161
 Yuan Dynasty, 156, 163
 Yuan Shi-kai, 84
 Yüe-chis, 49, 50, 76
 Yüe Chou bowls, 118, 150
 Yün K'ang caves, 98, 100, 102, 104
 Yung Lo, 56, 166, 168, 172
 Zeus, 80

